

Voting – should it be compulsory?

New

Internationalist

Putting the world to rights since 1981

NI 481 April 2015
newint.org

**Cosying up to
the Saudis**

**The scandal of
blacklisting**

**In the US the 99%
are rising**



Total control

Is Monsanto unstoppable?

CANADA & USA \$6.95



Tackling the Issues

that really matter
with lively, thoughtful,
well-researched coverage
that respects
your intelligence.

With a strong political
agenda biased towards
global peace and justice, we
examine issues, offer insights
and suggest solutions that
are all but ignored in the
mainstream corporate media.



Subscribe now for **\$44** plus tax
for 1 year (10 issues) and
SAVE over \$25 off
the newsstand price!

Includes
FREE
access to
the digital
edition

PLUS

Subscribe at
newint.org/go/sub1
Or call: 1-800-661-8700

Promotion Code: HA0115

Receive a **FREE** Map of the World.

The revolutionary Peters' Projection presents countries in their true proportion to one another. It's a whole new way of looking at the world!



NEW INTERNATIONALIST

THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST workers' co-operative exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless worldwide; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary to meet the basic needs of all; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for global justice.

The New Internationalist (NI) magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970. Together with a range of other publications it is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Trust and co-operatively managed:

Accounts: Frank Syrratt.
Advertising: Michael York.
Administration: Anna Weston.
Design: Andrew Kokotka, Ian Nixon, Juha Sorsa.
Editorial (Magazine): Vanessa Baird, Dinyar Godrej, Jo Lateu, Hazel Healy, Jamie Kelsey-Fry, Cris Moisescu.
Editorial (Publications): Chris Brazier.
Mail Order: Bev Dawes, James Rowland.
Marketing (Magazine): Amanda Synnott, Rob Norman, Alex Hambis.
Marketing (Publications): Dan Raymond-Barker, Amy Guest.
Production: Fran Harvey.
Web and IT: Charlie Harvey, Pete Stewart.
North America Publisher: Ian McKelvie.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To update your subscription with address changes etc or to contact us with any other subscription queries:
Website: www.newint.org/subscriptions
You will need your subscriber reference number which is on the magazine address label.
Email: newint@csglobal.ca
Phone: 1-800-661-8700
Fax: 905-946-0410
Canada PO Box 819, Markham, ON L3P 8A2
US Box 1062, Niagara Falls, NY 14304-1062

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES

Canada: 1 year \$44 (plus GST or HST) Foreign (by air) 1 year \$70
GST 121784854 US: 1 year \$44 Foreign (by air) 1 year \$70

Subscribers in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan should contact their local subscriptions office whose addresses can be found at: www.newint.org/about/contact/

North American
Editorial Office
2446 Bank Street, Suite 653
Ottawa, ON K1V 1A8 Tel: 613-826-1319 Email: nican@newint.org

Advertising: Michael York Email: michael@ems.org.uk

Permissions: Contact the editorial office. Member of Cancopy. Reproduction of all material in New Internationalist, excluding photographs, is free to primary and secondary schools.

NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTOR: Natalie Dalton, Disticor Direct, ndalton@disticor.com
Publications Mail Agreement number 40063336. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Department, NI Magazine, PO Box 819, Markham, ON L3P 8A2.

US periodicals postage paid at Niagara Falls, NY (USPS 329-770). US office of publication: 2421 Hyde Park Blvd, Niagara Fall, NY 14305.

US postmaster: send address changes to NI Magazine, PO Box 1062, Niagara Falls, NY 14304.

Indexing: Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index Quarterly (CPI.Q), Canadian Business and Current Affairs and the Alternative Press Index. Available in full-text electronic format from EBSCO and Proquest.

The New Internationalist is published monthly except that the Jan/Feb and July/Aug issues are combined.



@newint



facebook.com/newint

It helps us occasionally to allow carefully screened organizations to mail our subscribers. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

© New Internationalist Publications Ltd. 2014
ISSN 0305-9529

ISO accreditation 9001-2008



Monsanto... coming to a field near you?



As the conflict in Ukraine erupts, subsides, erupts, subsides, there seems to be one entity that cannot lose.

Biotech-giant Monsanto has an office in Ukraine. In 2013 a proposed \$17-billion IMF loan to Ukraine would, as a condition, have opened up the country to genetically modified crops. But then-president Viktor Yanukovich rejected the European Union agreement linked to the loan, deciding to go with a Russian deal instead. Yanukovich didn't last long – ousted in February 2014 – and the country descended into conflict.

A set-back for Monsanto? It seems not. The company is still pressing ahead with a \$140-million non-GM corn seed factory in western Ukraine. And if the region sinks into all-out war, that is good for Monsanto too, says trader and investment analyst Brian Kelly. Conflict will constrict the wheat supply from 'breadbasket' Ukraine, forcing a big price hike. And when wheat prices rise, says Kelly, so does the share price of the world's biggest supplier of seed – Monsanto. Meanwhile, influential pro-GM interests in several countries, including Britain and Australia, are pressing for a more 'open-door' policy towards genetically engineered crops and agri-giants like Monsanto. All the more reason for turning our attention to this most controversial and controlling of corporations – and the civil-society action against it that is spreading across the world.

Elsewhere in this month's magazine, Bangladeshi photographer Jannatul Mawa struck upon the simple but ingenious idea of asking middle-class Dhaka dwellers to be photographed with their maids. The result is, well, revealing... ■

Vanessa Baird

VANESSA BAIRD
for the New Internationalist Co-operative
newint.org

This month's contributors include:



Fernando Del Berro is a Spanish freelance photographer and journalist. He has a particular interest in human rights issues. His stories have been published in *Stern*, *El País*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Irish Times*, *Le Soir* and others.



Jason Louv writes on progressive politics, spirituality, environmentalism and corporate misdeeds. He is editor-in-chief of *Ultraculture*, specializing in 'outsider, futurist journalism', and lives in LA. His books include *Monsanto vs the World*, *Generation Hex* and *Thee Psychick Bible*.



Jannatul Mawa turned to professional photography after years working as a social and gender activist. She graduated from Pathshala, the South Asian Media Institute of Photography, and began her photographic career with UNICEF. Her works have been showcased globally.



Claire Robinson is the co-author of *GMO Myths and Truths*, available for free download at earthopensource.org. She is an editor at GMWatch, a public information service focusing on exposing the spin used by the GMO lobby to persuade the public to accept GM foods.

Towards a Commons-Based Political Economy
Join Us!
 Rethinking State, Market and Civil Society

Scan here!



20 – 24 April

Dartington

Schumacher College
 Tel: +44 (0)1803 865934
www.schumachercollege.org.uk

New Internationalist
www.newint.org

How to Contact Us

Subscriptions
 1-800-661-8700
newint@cdsglobal.ca
www.newint.org/subscriptions

Product Orders & Back Issues
 1-877-525-9353
shop.newint.org/na

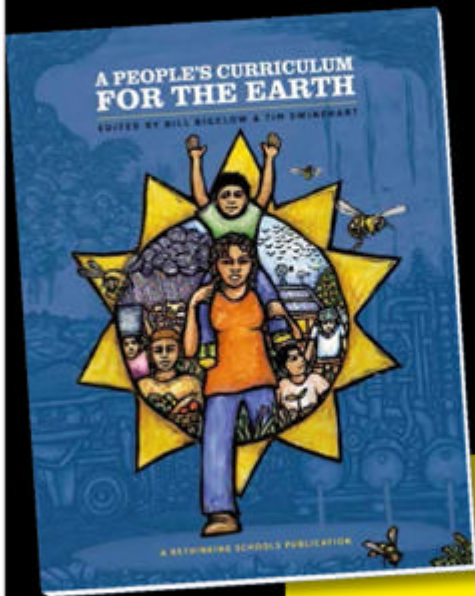
Advertising
 +44 (0)1865 811420
michael@emsm.org.uk

Editorial Queries and Permissions
nican@newint.org
 613-826-1319

New from Rethinking Schools!

A People's Curriculum for the Earth **Teaching Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis**

Edited by Bill Bigelow and Tim Swinehart



A *People's Curriculum for the Earth* is a collection of articles, role plays, simulations, stories, poems, and graphics to help breathe life into teaching about the environmental crisis. The book features some of the best articles from Rethinking Schools magazine alongside classroom-friendly readings on climate change, energy, water, food, and pollution—as well as on people who are working to make things better.

At a time when it's becoming increasingly obvious that life on Earth is at risk, here is a resource that helps students see what's wrong and imagine solutions.

"To really confront the climate crisis, we need to think differently, build differently, and teach differently. A People's Curriculum for the Earth is an educator's toolkit for our times." ~ NAOMI KLEIN, author of The Shock Doctrine and This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate

\$24.95

CALL TOLL-FREE: 1-800-669-4192 ORDER ONLINE: www.rethinkingschools.org/earth

Agenda

Stories making the news this month

- 8 Indigenous eviction resisted in Ecuador
- 8 TTIP: we are winning!
- 9 Post-Ebola, schools reopen
- 9 Introducing Alexis Tsipras
- 9 Refugees at risk in Kenya
- 10 Victory for autonomy in Syria
- 10 DR Congo's electoral cliffhanger
- 11 Illegal dam blockaded in Chile
- 11 Armenian genocide remembered
- PLUS: *Scratchy Lines* by cartoonist **Simon Kneebone** and **Reasons to be Cheerful**.

The Big Story – Monsanto



Lucy Nicholson / Reuters

12 Total control

Monsanto has a mission. But where will it lead the rest of us?
Vanessa Baird begins this month's investigation into one of the world's most powerful and hated corporations.

17 The FACTS – Monsanto and Co

18 Is Monsanto on the side of science?

Claire Robinson looks at what has happened to scientists who dare to say GM foods are not safe.

20 Towards an understanding of the psychopathy of patient Monsanto

'Patient Monsanto' is analysed by **Jason Louv**.

23 The farmer's friend

Are farmers benefiting from growing GM crops, as Monsanto claims? **Dionne Bunsha** investigates.

24 The People vs Monsanto

Around the world people are mobilizing against biotech bullies.

26 ACTION and RESOURCES

Front cover: Dominic Bugatto
Magazine designed by Andrew Kokotka and Juha Sorsa.
All monetary values are expressed in US dollars unless otherwise noted.

Features

38 Beating the blacklist

Phil Chamberlain reveals the secret war between big business and union activists.

40 Growing upside down

For thousands of Peruvian children, daily life means working to help feed the family. **Fernando Del Berro** meets one of them.



Fernando Del Berro

Mixed media

34 Film reviews

The Dark Horse, directed by James Napier Robertson; **Blind**, directed by Eskil Vogt.

35 Music reviews

The Reason Why Vol 2 by Goran Kajfeš' Subtropic Arkestra; **Ba Power**, by Bassekou Kouyaté & Ngoni Ba.

36 Book reviews

The Racket by Matt Kennard; **The Four Books** by Yan Lianke; **The Spice Box Letters** by Eve Makis; **The Adventure of the Busts of Eva Perón** by Carlos Gamerro.
PLUS: **Also out there...**

Opinion

30 Argument: Should voting be compulsory?

Mathew Lawrence and **Uri Gordon** go head to head.
PLUS: **Open Window** with guest cartoonist Jalal Hajir from Morocco.

33 Mark Engler

Is there a pathway to ending corporate rule in America?

43 Chris Coltrane

Cosying up to the Saudis.
PLUS: **Polyp's Big Bad World** cartoon.

Regulars

6 Letters

Desert dream; Africans cut off; and a call to irreverence.

7 Letter from Bangui

Ruby Diamonde witnesses the pain of a community that can't go home.

28 Country Profile: Malawi

44 Southern Exposure

Photographer **Jannatul Mawa** closes the distance between housewives and housemaids in Bangladesh.

45 Puzzle Page

PLUS: **Marc Roberts' Only Planet** cartoon.

46 And Finally

Kuwaiti journalist and novelist **Saud Alsanousi** talks to **Graeme Green** about the Gulf region's appetite for change.

Coming next month:

The big banking boondoggle

Praise, blame and all points in between? Give us your feedback.

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They might be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Letters should be sent to letters@newint.org or to your local **NI** office. Please remember to include a town and country for your address.



Desert dream

Thank you for the March edition (**NI 480**) – we have to exploit Green Energy and do it in an equitable manner.

Of particular interest to me was the article by Hamza Hamouchene on Desertec. Recently, I supervised a project regarding this topic for a remote area of Libya and this shows how difficult the technology of Desertec really is! The vast amounts of solar energy must be stored and hydrogen gas was the chosen route. However, water, from which the hydrogen is derived, is an extremely precious commodity in the desert regions of North Africa so for any solar installation this will be a continuing problem to surmount.

The work was carried out over a period which included Qaddafi's downfall and a degree of optimism pervaded the country. How sad that chaos is now reigning. As scientists/engineers, we can use reason with difficult technological projects but factoring in unstable politics is not amenable to rational thought. Desertec will unfortunately remain a dream rather than a reality in many parts of the Arab World.

Frank Thompson Stockport, England

Correction

The web addresses for Platform and BP or Not BP were incorrect in the *Action* page of **NI 480**. The correct details are: platformlondon.org and bp-or-not-bp.org

Ruined argument

Juan Carlos Chirgwin (*Letters, NI 480*) has some valid grievances about state terrorism but ruins his argument by outrageously blaming *Charlie Hebdo* for 'permitting' Western state violence by baiting Islamic fundamentalists.

The massacre of the journalists is entirely the responsibility of the perpetrators and not of those who exercise the universal right of free speech.

Free speech means nothing if it cannot be used for causing offence.

Those who express themselves only with words and pictures cannot be blamed for 'baiting' their killers. That sounds worryingly like blaming women for baiting rapists by their choice of clothes.

Brian Quinn Knaresborough, England

Get irreverent

Juan Carlos Chirgwin seems to be blaming the victims for exercising their right to free speech and so provoking their attackers and then causing a state clampdown on free speech. I urge people to irreverence in the face of authority, however offensive. This is a key way of holding authority to account and making sure those in power do not rely on excessive deference to get away with their self-serving practices.

Mark Holton Brighton, England

The unconnected

I have been a subscriber for over 30 years. My main reason has been the magazine's bias towards the Majority World in which I have lived all my adult life. It was therefore a disappointment to read **NI 479**. Your figures show that 79 per cent of Africans and 68 per cent of Asians have no internet coverage. In my own

home country of Malawi the figure is 86 per cent.

Despite this lack of cover for billions of people, your editorial states that 'it has never been easier to engage and interact' – it is not clear how this applies to all those without access to the internet or to rural dwellers like myself who have access but normally need 15 minutes to download one megabyte. Your *Big Story* leader claims 'We have the library of Alexandria at our fingertips' and that 'we have never been connected as we are today'. This 'we' certainly does not refer to the Majority World.

Internet access is linked to the availability of dependable electricity and there are now some 3.2 billion people who have no such access. That figure is set to grow over the next decade as the rate of population growth exceeds the development of new generating capacity, particularly in Africa.

Having dedicated an issue to the challenges facing the wealthier section of our human family, might we have some attention paid to the communication needs of those who have no access to the internet and are unlikely to do so for many years to come?

Stephen Carr Zomba, Malawi



Seeing through the void

At last – someone saying something sensible about 'radicalization' (*Essay, NI 478*)! It is for this blend of intelligence and insight that I subscribe to **NI**.

People are radicalized when their most deeply held values

are trampled on by others. We appear to be genetically programmed to want 'fairness' – children everywhere are quick to spot, and complain about, *unfairness*. Young people everywhere also want the world in which they are going to live their lives to be fair. Why should they not? They are going to spend their next 50, 60, 70, 80 years in it.

Now nearly 65, I find that I am radicalized by the egregiously and increasingly shameless greedy and dishonest behaviour I have witnessed in our society's 'leaders' (politicians, bankers, FTSE company directors, MDs of large public institutions) over the last few decades. Perhaps our 'leaders' fear less the 'radicalized' youth than the fact that the 'radicalized' youth has seen through them and the 'void at the core' of what they offer.

While there are people determined to follow the guidance of a moral compass, there is *some* hope. The really dangerous people are those who think the moral compass is followed only by fools.

Donald Booth Holmfirth, England

Wanted

I agree the ICC is not racist (*Argument, NI 478*), but I will not be happy until Bush and Blair are taken to The Hague for war crimes, based on the misery and dislocations caused by their wishing to steal Iraq's oil.

Peter Foreman Chelmsford, England

Mysterious ways

I have recently subscribed to your magazine, having for the last two years wondered why my local barman is such a measured font of knowledge and oracle for all things humanitarian throughout the world, be it favela, slum, shebeen, neighbourhood bar, speakeasy. Keep up the good work, loving your informed news in the Emerald Isle.

John Flanagan Dublin, Ireland

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the **New Internationalist**.

When a sanctuary is a prison

With their abandoned homes just a stone's throw away,
RUBY DIAMONDE witnesses the pain of a hemmed-in community.

Aziz used to be a pharmacist.

In fact, he still is – but he lost his small pharmacy and his house when anti-Balaka rebels descended on his hometown, Carnot, just over a year ago.

‘When they first arrived here, they held a public meeting,’ he says. ‘They told us they’d come to govern and protect our town. But then they began attacking us, the Muslims.’ He pauses and looks at the ground. ‘I am still too frightened to walk around my own town.’

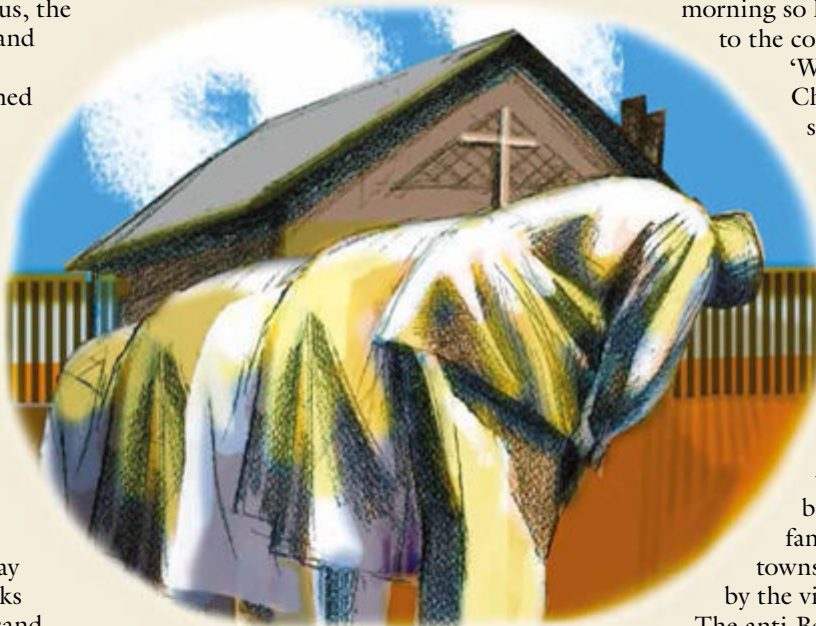
Carnot is just a one-hour flight west from Bangui, but it’s a different reality here. As I wander this sprawling town, I can see how elegant it used to be; there are still some wide boulevards of palm trees, but most of the grand colonial-style houses are rotting away and the roads are tracks filled with rocks and sand.

Carnot also used to be known for its diamonds, and you can still find ‘artisanal mines’ just outside the town, though ‘artisanal’ hardly sums up the grind of men digging for diamonds, day in day out, with handmade shovels or just their bare hands.

But in the spring of 2013 Seleka rebels arrived from the capital, Bangui, and everything changed. ‘The people here thought we, the Muslims, supported Seleka,’ says Aziz. ‘But they were not here for us, and we all suffered under them.’ The Seleka terrorized Carnot for months, eventually abandoning the town when they heard that well-armed anti-Balaka fighters were on their way. But their violence had ruined relationships between communities of farmers, traders and merchants who had been

living side by side in Carnot for generations.

At the beginning of 2014, just weeks after the Seleka left, the anti-Balaka descended on Carnot in force – and began to ‘liberate’ the town by targeting the Muslim community. When his small pharmacy was ransacked, Aziz was shot and injured.



The Muslims began to flee the town, though most had been born in Carnot, had spent their lives here, and had no idea where else to go. Many headed west to the town of Kenju, on the Cameroon border, and set up temporary camps, which are still there. However, more than a thousand Muslims sought refuge in Carnot’s local Catholic mission.

Over the past year some of the displaced families in the mission have joined the others in Kenju. But 14 months after the anti-Balaka first arrived here, 683 displaced people are still living inside the Catholic mission, including scores of children. Each man or woman here can tell you the exact date they arrived, and many have not left this compound

in more than a year. They are now guarded by UN peacekeepers for their own safety.

Conditions in the mission are basic: many families live in tents, and survive on UN food rations; the UN has also built toilets, and families cook on small open fires across the compound. Hundreds are living in the church, which they vacate every Sunday morning so local Christians can come to the communion service.

‘We can’t blame the Christians for this situation,’ says Aziz. ‘We can’t say they all support the anti-Balaka, like we can’t say Muslims all supported the Seleka.’

But from the time I’ve spent in Carnot, talking to people in the mission and across the town, I can see there is barely any contact between the two communities. Trust between these displaced families and the other townspeople has been shattered by the violence they’ve all suffered. The anti-Balaka is still in Carnot and still armed. Muslims do not feel safe enough to leave the compound.

This quiet, devastating crisis is unreported even in Bangui. People from all over this town tell me they are poor, struggling to survive and have been forgotten and abandoned, and they are right.

‘I’ve heard people [here] say that we Muslims should leave and “go home”,’ says Aziz. ‘I just want to say to them, can we talk about this? I was born here, my parents too; our family house is just nearby, though I have not seen it now for more than a year.’ He shrugs his shoulders. ‘I have been here all my life. I have lost my work and my home, but I can’t leave. Because I have nowhere to go.’ ■

Ruby Diamonde is a pseudonym.

ECUADOR

Indigenous eviction resisted

The government of Ecuador wants to evict the country's largest Indigenous organization from its historical headquarters. President Rafael Correa accused the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) of using the building for 'political' purposes.

CONAIE, the umbrella organization for all Ecuador's Indigenous peoples and nationalities, has been a key political actor since the 1990 uprising, when mass occupations, blockades and shut-downs forced the government to invite Indigenous movements to the negotiating table.

The house granted to CONAIE nearly a quarter of a century ago is a symbolic reminder of Indigenous struggles for self-determination and more inclusive forms of democracy. These headquarters not only facilitate Indigenous participation in national politics; they are also physical testimony to the construction of a relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples.

The threat of eviction has largely been interpreted as political persecution against Ecuador's most organized social movement, inciting international solidarity. Boaventura de Sousa Santos wrote a scathing letter to President Correa, defining the eviction as an 'unjust and politically senseless act'. Bolivia's Indigenous organization CONAMAQ condemned it as 'racist and discriminatory'. Over 400 global intellectuals, including Antonio Negri and Noam Chomsky, signed a letter denouncing the act as 'retaliation that disrespects the history of an organization to which Ecuador owes extraordinarily deep and positive democratic struggles and social transformation'.

The Ministry of Social Inclusion informed CONAIE of the



Manuela Lavinas Picq

forthcoming eviction last December. CONAIE activated legal proceedings to retain the house. Then, on the planned day of eviction in January, leaders from various factions of Ecuador's Indigenous movement came together in a display of political unity to defend the building in a two-day siege. So far, Correa's government has denied CONAIE's legal claims and formed a pro-government Indigenous coalition to delegitimize them.

The eviction reveals the tense relationship between Ecuador's leftist government and Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, it indicates the government's difficulty in committing to a plurinational state, as required by the Constitution.

The status quo holds. CONAIE refuses to leave its house and has declared indefinite resistance. The denouement now depends on the government's ability to avoid a forceful eviction and take the high road of plurinational politics. ■

Manuela Lavinas Picq

TRADE

TTIP: we are winning!

These are exciting times for the global justice movement. A mass campaign is building against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the corporate trade deal being negotiated in secret between the EU and US. And if official concern is anything to go by, we are winning.

The negotiations were launched in 2013, and officials still hope to conclude a deal before the end of the Obama presidency next year. TTIP is not a traditional trade agreement aimed at reducing border tariffs, already at minimal levels. Instead, it focuses on dismantling the remaining 'barriers' to corporate profit that exist, namely the social standards, labour rights and environmental regulations that we hold most dear.

In an additional affront to democracy, TTIP would introduce new powers for foreign corporations to bypass domestic courts and sue governments for potential loss of profits, in a parallel judicial system available to them alone. And if that were not enough, official estimates predict the deal will cost at least a million jobs in the EU and US combined.

For these and many other reasons, opposition to TTIP is now hitting unprecedented heights. Environmental activists have made common cause with trade unions, food-safety campaigners and digital-rights groups to oppose the deal. National anti-TTIP platforms are co-ordinating local action groups across Europe and beyond.

A Global Day of Action against TTIP and all other free-trade agreements has been called for 18 April, with major protests planned

in countries across the world. Clear your diary and be part of something amazing, as we take back power and build a better future for people and planet alike! ■

waronwant.org/ttip
John Hilary, War on Want

10 years ago...



put together by Dinyar Godrej in April 2005. In it, street children told their life stories in their own words. As Dinyar said in introducing it: 'This edition comes to

...Amid the vast body of work that the New Internationalist has published over its 42 years there are very few theme issues that stand out as sharply in the memory as the one



Ebola and the long road to recovery



Party of the poor wins Delhi Assembly elections

WEST AFRICA

Post-Ebola, schools reopen

Children are back in school uniform following a fall in cases of the deadly Ebola virus, which has killed 9,000 people since December 2013. All educational institutions in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea closed in July 2014 to prevent the fever's spread. Guinea's school gates reopened on 19 January, and within three weeks a quarter of all children on the school roll had returned.

Liberia planned to welcome back students on 2 February, but the government delayed to allow more preparation time. This involved disinfecting schools used as treatment centres and ensuring every site was equipped with chlorinated water buckets for hand-washing and thermometers to monitor fever-like symptoms.

On 16 February, schools such as the Franciscan Works' Liberia Mission did reopen. Director Mary Ann O'Driscoll said teachers would look out for pupils suffering trauma: 'They may have seen people die. Maybe some members of their families died.' Teachers also offered extra tutoring and remedial education to help pupils catch up.

Sierra Leone waited until 30 March to restart. Its teachers were trained to deliver Ebola awareness within the curriculum. Government national publicity and outreach co-ordinator Abdulai Bayratty said: 'If any case of Ebola emerges in any of our school systems, we will be able to handle it adequately.' ■

Gabriella Jóźwik

you purposely shorn of the flourishes of the writer's craft; it leaves aside the observations of the analysts; its messages are unembroidered. Instead there is the burning honesty of the children's words' (nin.tl/Streetchildren).

We arguably learn more about the reality of street children's lives from these extended personal testimonies than we do from a hundred NGO reports. We heard from Tanya, selling sex in Harare; Ricardo, evading the police in Montevideo; and Rukshana, avoiding entanglements with boys in Mumbai. Most moving of

Introducing...

Alexis Tsipras

Greece's new Prime Minister, from anti-austerity party Syriza, will need all his considerable political skills and a good deal of luck too.

Tsipras' party holds a near-majority in the Greek parliament after voters in January acted with a refreshingly clear-sighted understanding of their country's dire situation. They saw what, as Leonard Cohen put it, 'everybody knows': the massive Greek debt is unpayable and the austerity programme imposed on the country by the infamous Troika (IMF, European Commission and European Central Bank) is not only unfair to poor and middle-class Greeks but has not 'restarted' the economy in any meaningful sense.

Either the whole deal must be rethought, or Greece will be forced to default and leave the euro. Tsipras and Syriza do not want this (unlike those unseemly anti-Europeans the UK

Independence Party and Greece's Golden Dawn). They are not anti-Europe. But they want a democratic Europe rather than one where the banks call the tune to which the Brussels bureaucrats dance.

Tsipras has neither much time nor much room for manoeuvre. He has on his side an engaged and active population, and ranged against him Europe's (and particularly Germany's) 'One Per Cent' and their political servants.

It is a big challenge for this radical son of Greece's dense, complicated socialist political culture. At 41, Tsipras is the country's youngest prime minister since the 1860s. An avowed atheist with an eye for the big picture, he is a breath of fresh air – not just for Greece, but for Europe as a whole.

Richard Swift



Art of Focus/Alamy

KENYA

Refugees at risk

Thousands of refugees in camps in northern and eastern Kenya face an uncertain future, following a new security law that drastically limits the number of refugees that can live in or enter the country.

The controversial Security Laws (Amendments) Act 2014, passed by Kenya's Parliament last December, limits the total number of refugees to a mere 150,000 – less than a quarter

of the more than 600,000 currently sheltering in the country.

The majority are from Somalia and South Sudan – both in the throes of decades of instability. Others are from Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Ethiopia. Hundreds of thousands risk being repatriated if authorities decide to enforce the law, introduced under the pretext of securing the East African country against attacks from al-Qaeda-allied terror group al-Shabaab, which controls huge parts of neighbouring Somalia.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is reviewing the situation: 'We are talking to the government with a view to ensuring a continued sustainable and peaceful stay for refugees living in Kenya,' revealed Emmanuel Nyabera, UNHCR's Nairobi spokesperson.

The laws are part of a collection of amendments made in acrimonious circumstances. Tempers ran wild as the opposition tried to block their passage, and some sections have been successfully challenged in court for violating not only the constitution but also basic freedoms. ■

Maina Waruru



Afra Nasser,
blogging for Yemen

Egypt, defeated

Vandana Shiva:
In the soil are the answers

SYRIA

Victory for autonomy

It was a day that made another world seem possible. As Greece took to the streets to celebrate Syriza's electoral win, with its promise to end austerity, Kurdish fighters in Syria announced victory in their epic resistance against ISIS. On 26 January, fighters from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ) ended ISIS's four-month siege of the city of Kobane on the border of Turkey and Rojava, the autonomous Kurdish region of Syria.

Much international attention has been paid to the fact that 35 per cent of the Kurdish fighters are women. There are over 7,000 in the autonomous women's units, and they have played a major frontline role. Negrin, a YPJ fighter, told the Dicle News Agency: 'With our struggle we defeated a mentality which looked upon women as slaves.'

The resistance against ISIS may have captured international attention, but the social revolution taking place in Rojava is less widely understood. With the advent of the Syrian civil war and the rise of insurgency, the Kurds were able to take control of their territory and create an autonomous zone.

The region is organized from the bottom up through people's assemblies and local councils. A gender quota of 40 per cent women operates throughout the democratic structure and a system of co-presidency operates at all levels,

with one woman and one man sharing administrative roles. There has been an explosion of co-operative enterprises and new schools.

This system of 'democratic confederalism and democratic autonomy' has been developing in Kurdistan for a decade, based on the writings of US anarchist Murray Bookchin, whose work strongly influenced the imprisoned Kurdistan Workers' Party leader Abdullah Öcalan.

While Kurdish fighters, with the help of US airstrikes, prevented a massacre in Kobane and secured a decisive victory against religious fundamentalism, outside help is urgently needed. The Kurdish Red Crescent is providing humanitarian aid to displaced Kurds, but more international help is required as families return to Kobane to rebuild their city. ■

Claire Fauset



A fighter at her post, defending Kurdish ground troops as they advance against ISIS.

Gail Orenstein/NurPhoto.com/Alamy

DR CONGO

Electoral cliffhanger

In January 2015, popular outrage over a proposed electoral law drove the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) onto the streets. The law would have reduced the 2016 elections

to a general census and delayed proper presidential elections by up to four years. Over 40 were killed in the capital, Kinshasa. The protests, inflamed by opposition leaders, forced the government to back down and pass a modified version of the law, with provincial and congressional elections now scheduled

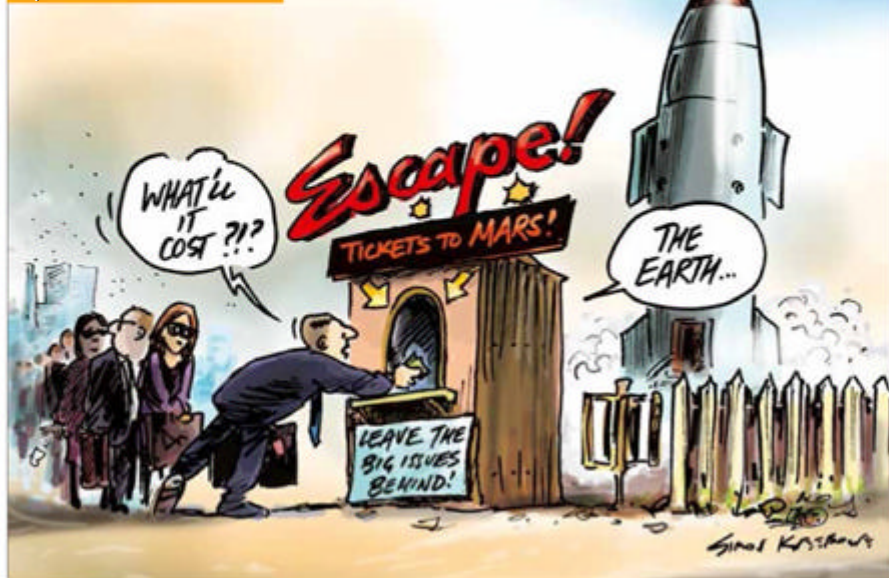
to take place over the next 22 months, culminating in presidential elections on 27 November 2016.

The outcome of these elections is a cliffhanger, for two main reasons. First, the head of the electoral commission (CENI), Abbé Apollinaire Malu Malu, has credibility issues. Being close to President Kabila, Malu Malu's fairness has been in doubt since the contested 2006 elections. Powerful leaders, such as the late Cardinal Frédéric Etsou, have questioned Malu Malu's impartiality.

Second, CENI's 2015-16 electoral agenda is overloaded and expensive, costing over \$1 billion – about 12 per cent of the Congolese annual budget. These high costs have caused journalist Fabien Kusuanika, from Télé Tshangu, to wonder whether CENI will be able to deliver.

It is not an exaggeration to claim that the DRC's near future is dependent on Kabila's political future. The way Kabila leaves power, peacefully or by force, will not only affect the Congolese people but also the wider Great Lakes Region. There are growing signs of discord between Kabila and his international supporters. On 15 February Kabila

Scratchy Lines by Simon Kneebone



CHILE

Illegal dam blockaded

For over 14 years the residents of Los Caimanes have fought against Latin America's largest tailings dam, constructed by mining transnational Antofagasta Minerals' subsidiary, Minera Los Pelambres (MLP).

Declared illegal before it was even built, the tailings dam dried and polluted the valley. It left no clean water for consumption or agriculture. Residents' objections brought them into conflict with the Luksic brothers, whose business empire, which includes finance, transport and telecommunications as well as mining, took root during the Pinochet dictatorship. The Luksics' close personal ties to President Michelle Bachelet have recently caused a scandal.

After countless mobilizations and legal challenges the community won significant victories. These included legal recognition of the risk posed by seismic activity, and damage to archaeological heritage. Last October the Chilean Supreme Court finally

ordered the company to return the natural flow of water to the valley.

However, MLP took no action, so the community decided to occupy the access route to the tailings dam so as to force the company to comply. The blockade lasted over 75 days.

Aside from this head-on confrontation, the fight for water and justice has affected the lives of community activists in myriad ways. The town's infrastructure and services now rely on the company. Those who resist lose employment and livelihoods.

The residents of Los Caimanes were inexperienced in such battles, but their lives grew increasingly difficult after the installation of the dam. One woman, speaking anonymously, said 'we felt trampled, and abandoned by the authorities. Why does our state send the police to protect a private company that is killing us?'

The community was recently evicted from the blockade. However, residents vowed to keep resisting, and soon afterwards began an occupation of MLP's office. ■

Elif Karakartal and Ali Sargent

renounced UN military assistance for fighting Rwandan rebels, accusing the UN and members of Kinshasa's diplomatic corps of 'interfering' in Congo's domestic affairs. Could this international estrangement help oust Kabila in 2016?

Since independence, the DRC has had three 'free' elections: 1960, 2006 and 2011. In 1961, both international interests and Congolese leaders' political ambitions smothered the nascent Congolese democracy, peaking with prime minister Patrice Lumumba's assassination. In 2006 and 2011, the international community suppressed Congolese voices by supporting Kabila, in spite of blatant electoral irregularities.

Today, the most pertinent question is whether the international community will allow Congolese people to elect their next president freely. It is equally reasonable to ask why the DRC's election costs are so exorbitant. And if the international community is contributing to the elections, does it have a say in who gets to lead the country? These are questions that both the Congolese people and the international community need to address. ■

Patrick Litanga

ARMENIA

Genocide remembered

One hundred years ago, around a million Armenians were killed in what the world recognizes as the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Although now a century old, it's still a contentious and divisive issue which shapes the politics of modern Turkey.

There have been some notable developments in the past year, according to Richard Giragosian, director of the Regional Studies Centre in Yerevan, Armenia. These include an important new precedent: every future Turkish prime minister is expected to make a statement, like President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan did last year while he was prime minister, to mark the 24 April commemoration of the genocide.

'The statement not only offered a "safer space" to discuss the genocide, it also broadened the constituency for dialogue by sending a message both to Armenians and to Erdoğan's own supporters,' Giragosian explained.

In another breakthrough, the Armenian community in Turkey won a legal battle in February for ownership of a historic Armenian cemetery in Istanbul. ■

Sophie Cousins

Reasons to be cheerful

Youthful victory

Young Peruvians took to the streets in early 2015 to protest against a law that would have slashed their labour rights – and they won! The 2014 Youth Labour Regime Law was seen by them as an attack on their rights, in the interests of big business. So they mobilized and, despite serious police repression, persuaded their elected representatives to dissolve the law.

No tar



UK Tar Sands Network

Shell has cancelled a massive tar sands mine in Canada. The community living downstream from the 200,000-barrel-a-day Pierre River mine has opposed it since 2007 due to pollution and loss of traditional livelihoods. The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation welcomed the decision as 'a clear sign that tar sands development is no longer business as usual'.

Third gender win

Nepal is going to start issuing passports with a third option for people who do not identify as male or female. It joins India, Australia and New Zealand in allowing transgender people this possibility. Homosexuality was only legalized in Nepal in 2007 and LGBT people still face discrimination, but welcome this as a positive step forward.



Dam fools

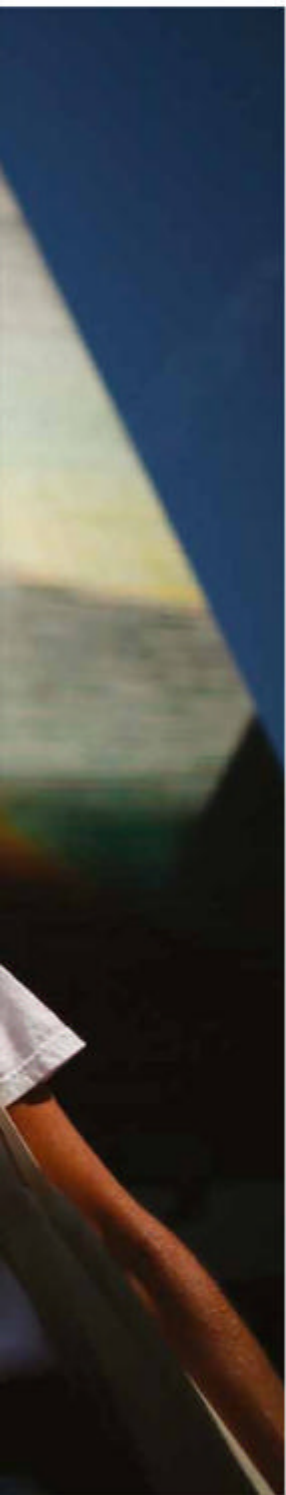
A hydroelectric dam in Panama that would flood the territory of the Indigenous Ngäbe Bugle communities has been suspended after a long-running battle. The Barro Blanco dam was initially approved under the UN's so-called 'Clean Development Mechanism', despite violating local communities' rights. It has been temporarily halted for lax environmental standards, and locals are hopeful this will lead to a permanent cancellation.

Total control

Recently voted both the most admired and the most evil corporation – is there is no stopping Monsanto? **VANESSA BAIRD** examines the company that would feed the world.



On 23 May protesters worldwide will be taking to the streets to 'March Against Monsanto!' They accuse the biotech giant of both poisoning and controlling the food supply.



Lucy Nicholson / Reuters

Lisa Safarian seems a caring kind of person.

'As a mom and member of the team at Monsanto, I'm focused on food pretty much 24/7, whether I'm thinking about meals with my family or working with farmers to help us produce better harvests,' she writes in a blog on the company's Facebook page.¹

She is one of the 'passionate people' working at Monsanto to 'help feed our growing population'. Because as the seed giant says: 'We are dedicated to helping feed nine billion more sustainably by 2050.'

And more. Did you know, for example, that Monsanto is funding girls' education in rural Vietnam? There's a picture of the grateful recipients, beaming in their crisp white blouses and red ties.

Or that the company is named in the Human Rights Campaign's 2015 index as one of the 'Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality'?

Yet this is the company that was recently voted 'world's most evil corporation' in a digital poll organized by SumOfUs. That is accused by Friends of the Earth International of plotting to 'force-feed' GM crops to African nations.² And that has for the past two years brought hundreds of thousands of protesters onto the streets in over 50 countries to 'March Against Monsanto', brandishing placards that accuse the biotech giant of a multitude of crimes.

After a period in the doldrums, genetic modification is back on the activist agenda. The industry has upped its game – and its ambitions.

'We're seeing a truly unprecedented promotion of GM,' says Liz O'Neill of the British campaign group GM-Freeze. 'The companies have rebranded themselves and they are much cleverer about it.'

They also have tremendous economic firepower, as a multimillion-dollar campaign to oppose mandatory GMO (genetically modified organism) food labelling in the US shows.

Political lobbying, on an international scale, has intensified. There is much to play for. Other biotech giants are involved – Dow, DuPont, Syngenta, Bayer, BASF – but Monsanto is at the head of the pack, pushing hard into Europe and Asia and, with the help of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, into Africa too.

The stakes are high – control over the world's food chain, no less.

Safe or not?

It is almost two decades since genetically modified crops started being grown on a commercial scale. A tenth of the world's cropland is now covered by them. But still the question remains: are they safe to eat?

'Yes,' says Monsanto. 'Plants and crops with GM traits have been tested more than any other crops – with no credible evidence of harm to humans or animals.'³

Scientists from the American Association

for the Advancement of Sciences and Britain's Royal Society agree. In the words of British environmentalist and biotech convert Mark Lynas, 'you are more likely to get hit by an asteroid than be hurt by GM food.'⁴

The biotech industry's safety tests have been accepted by the key US regulatory bodies: the Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

But critics of GM – notably health and environmental organizations, including many scientists – are not convinced.

They point out that most of the safety tests are conducted or commissioned by the industry itself; that some independent peer-reviewed studies have found that genetically modified crops can have unintended toxic and allergenic effects. Several specific animal-feeding studies show evidence of DNA disruption and liver and kidney damage.^{5,6}

One study tracks the rapid commercialization of GM agriculture since 1996 (and the increased use of Monsanto's Roundup glyphosate pesticide that entails) with the dramatic increase in cases of coeliac disease, gluten intolerance, autism, diabetes, Alzheimer's, ADHD and other 'modern' health disorders.⁷

'Based on available evidence... at present no GM crop or food can be categorically stated as safe to consume'

People who live in areas of intensive GM soy cultivation in Argentina are twice as likely to die of cancer.⁸ Brazilian soy growers suffer from DNA disruption and liver and kidney damage, another recent study reveals.⁹

Leading molecular geneticist Michael Antoniou of Kings College, London University, says more independent and in-depth molecular research is needed to find out exactly what is causing the damage. He concludes: 'Based on available evidence and inadequacy of the tests requested by regulators, at present no GM crop and food can be categorically stated as safe to consume, especially on a long-term, life-long basis.'¹⁰ The 300 scientists who signed a statement saying there was no scientific consensus on GMO safety seem to agree.¹¹

Later this year a Russian-led team of European scientists will embark on a major three-year, \$25-million study of the effects of Monsanto GM maize on around 6,000 rats. Asked to comment, Monsanto declined.¹²

Feed the world – or poison it?

Meanwhile, global population is growing; climate change is upon us; and environmental degradation continues apace. Anyone who

Monsanto's biotech has turned Argentina into the world's third largest producer of soy – all of it GM. Pesticide use is very heavy. Activist Oscar Alfredo Di Vincensi (right) was doused with pesticide while trying to stop illegal spraying near homes. People living in areas of high GM soy cultivation are more than twice as likely to get cancer and to suffer a range of health problems including birth defects and severe respiratory problems, numerous studies show. Monsanto blames misuse of pesticides by farmers.



Natasha Pisenko / PA

can provide an easy solution is likely to be welcomed with open arms.

In a recent advertisement, Monsanto seemed to be offering just the answer. The ad claimed that GM crops 'enable us to produce more food sustainably whilst using fewer resources; provide a healthier environment by saving on pesticides; decrease greenhouse-gas emissions and increase crop yields substantially.' That was until the company was forced to pull the advertisement, unable to provide sufficient evidence to support its claims.¹³

The two major and most-repeated claims made for GM agriculture are that it delivers bigger yields and reduces the need for pesticides. Neither has proved to be true.

'Commercial GE [genetically engineered] crops have made no inroads so far into raising the intrinsic real or potential yield of any crop,' says Doug Gurian-Sherman, former biotech adviser with the US Environmental Protection Agency.¹⁴ A 2014 USDA report confirms this. With some crops – soy, for example – yields have actually been lower.¹⁵ Traditional breeding, on the other hand, has been spectacularly successful, adds Gurian-Sherman.¹⁴

Even if genetic engineering were consistently to produce bumper yields, it would not deal with the problem of world hunger. That is caused primarily by political issues such as unequal access to food, distribution problems and wastage. We already grow more than enough to feed the nine billion of us expected by 2050.¹⁶

The second claim, that GM crops require less pesticide (a term covering both insect- and weedkillers), is even more questionable.

Since 1996 there has been a small reduction in the use of chemical insecticide as a result of GM insecticidal crops (such as Monsanto's

Bt cotton). But this has been swamped by a far larger increase in the use of weedkiller, especially the glyphosate herbicide used with GM crops.⁵

In the US, for example, pesticide use overall increased by an estimated 183 million kilograms (or seven per cent, if the same areas had been planted with non-GM crops) between 1996 and 2011.¹⁷

By comparison, most western European countries dramatically reduced pesticide use while increasing yields, using non-GM farming.⁵

It gets worse. GM agriculture has actually created the need for ever more pesticides. Today an estimated 28 million hectares of US farmland are infested with pigweed, marestail and ryegrass – just a few of the superweeds that have mutated and become resistant to glyphosate.

They have appeared in at least 18 countries – predominantly big GM growers like Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. Pigweed, or palmer amaranth, is especially aggressive. Competing for water and light, it grows more than two metres tall, at a rate of five centimetres a day, and has stems that ruin agricultural machinery.¹⁸

Farmers in the southern US states have ploughed under thousands of hectares of crops in an effort to control pigweed – and spent millions of dollars hand-weeding it. But the weeds are winning, says University of Illinois crop science professor Aaron Hager. 'They're evolving faster, better to survive in the environment, than we're coming up with solutions, at least chemical solutions, to control them.'¹⁸

Monsanto responded to the crisis by paying farmers to spray additional herbicides to

GM?

At least **26** countries have total or partial bans on GM.

64 countries have mandatory labelling of GM food.

The Nation
ninth.tl/countries-ban-gmos

Center for Food Safety
ninth.tl/countries-that-label

In the US levels of glyphosate found in urine are **10x higher** than in Europe. High levels also found in breastmilk.

ninth.tl/glyphosate-urine-breastmilk

supplement Roundup. Monsanto's main rival, Dow, created a new herbicide, Enlist Duo – a combination of glyphosate and 2,4-D, alarmingly the two main chemical ingredients of Agent Orange. In January this year Monsanto obtained the first stage of approval for its new Roundup Ready Xtend trait and crop system, specially designed to tackle superweeds. This system will work with Monsanto's new and even more potent pesticide mix of glyphosate and dicamba.^{19,20,21}

Superbugs – such as corn rootworm – resistant to insecticide exuded from Bt corn, soy or cotton are now also appearing. It does not bode well.²²

Is Monsanto damaged by any of this? Maybe. Or maybe not. After all, it is a company that sells both seeds and pesticides. Farmers and citizens may find themselves tied to a pesticides treadmill, but it's a merry-go-round for Monsanto and Co.

Modus operandi

Monsanto is a canny operator. Its business model is highly profitable and ingeniously controlling.

Genetic engineering accounts for about half of its business, but it is the key to its power. By modifying the genes of seeds, Monsanto can create new products which it can then patent as 'inventions'. When it sells its GM seeds to farmers, they have to sign an agreement to pay royalties on any re-use of the seed, or they will face legal action.

Having bought up much of the competition, Monsanto is today the world's largest seed corporation. It has such market domination that farmers are often stuck for alternatives, making them especially vulnerable to dramatic price hikes. As well as creating a dependency, Monsanto's virtual seed monopoly seriously reduces biodiversity, as Indian scientist and activist Vandana Shiva has been warning for years. It looks like a recipe for total control.^{23,24} A US Department of Justice investigation into Monsanto's possibly illegal domination of the seed market, started in 2010, was quietly dropped in 2012.²⁴

Monsanto's executive vice-president Robert Fraley recently wrote that organic and GM are both part of food's future.²⁵ It is hard to see how. GM farming effectively excludes other options. Organic farmers are put out of business when their fields become contaminated by GM material blown over from neighbouring farms. (See 'The People vs Monsanto', page 24.)

Monsanto is no slouch when it comes to leveraging political influence. It is one of the biggest spenders in Washington and has an impressive list of people with ties to the company who work for the government.²⁶ Potential presidential candidate Hillary

Farmers and citizens may find themselves tied to a pesticides treadmill but it's a merry-go-round for Monsanto and Co

Clinton, who was legal counsel for Monsanto, remains an ardent GMO supporter.

The company's political clout extends abroad, too. According to Tomás Palau, a Paraguayan sociologist specializing in agrarian issues, Monsanto effectively controls the agricultural and trade policy of several South American countries, including Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. He told Marie-Monique Robin: 'It's the company that decides what seeds and what chemical products will be used.'²³ Current efforts to win over the political class in Africa appear to be following a similar winning formula.

Anti-GM activists lament the weak regulatory regime that exists in most countries when it comes to genetic engineering. State regulatory authorities follow the example of the US and take the biotech industry's word for the safety of its products.

But the food-labelling row that is currently gripping the US could be something of a political game changer. Even for a US public fed a daily diet of GM in around 80 per cent

In the name of the wife

The story of Monsanto begins in 1901, in Saint Louis, Missouri. Founder John Francis Queeny gave the company his wife's family name. First products were food additives, including the artificial sweetener, saccharin, used by the booming soft-drink industry.

The company's CV then gets a lot more complicated – and sounds more like a charge sheet for crimes against humanity than a list of proud achievements.

During the 1940s it helped develop the atom bomb; in the 1960s it manufactured Agent Orange (used to such devastating effect during the Vietnam War). Monsanto was also responsible for the highly toxic pesticide DDT (banned in the US in 1972); PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyl industrial lubricants, banned in the US in 1979); and rBST, the controversial bovine growth hormone to boost milk-production in cows. On numerous occasions Monsanto has faced legal claims relating to health and environmental damage caused by its products or practices and has had to make substantial payouts.

In the 1980s, Monsanto scientists were among the first to genetically modify a plant cell. Field tests took place in 1988. By the late-1990s the company was successfully marketing its Roundup farming system, consisting of weedkiller and crop seeds genetically engineered to tolerate it.

In 2000, the company split into two: Pharmacia, and the agricultural business we now know as Monsanto, producing mainly seeds and pesticides. After several shopping sprees to buy up the competition, in 2005 Monsanto became the world's biggest seed company and its range of GM products grew to include insecticidal Bt seeds (such as Bt cotton). The company's fortunes soared as GM farming systems expanded across the world and the company extracted royalties from farmers reusing its patented seed. In 2010 Monsanto was listed 'company of the year' by *Forbes*. It came bottom for ethics.

In 2012 it ventured into IT and data information, purchasing Precision Planting (providing computer hardware and software) and, in 2013, Climate Corp – which gives Monsanto access to detailed information about the land and buying habits of farmers.

Source: Wikipedia



of processed food, the pro-GM lobby may be going too far in its determination to blindfold citizens.

Monsanto says that it opposes food labelling because it believes that GM food is 'equivalent' to non-GM food and so 'mandatory labelling of food products could mislead shoppers into believing there are dietary or nutritional differences between labelled or non-labelled products'. It would also be 'unfair to farmers'.²⁷

But according to Colin O'Neil, director of government affairs at the Center for Food Safety in Washington, 90-95 per cent of US citizens surveyed want mandatory labelling. So does the National Farmers Union.

Pro-GM interests, including the Grocery Manufacturers Association, are throwing a huge amount of money – over \$100 million so far – at trying to stop citizens knowing what they are putting in their mouths.

'Why are companies like Monsanto spending so much to oppose labelling? What have they got to hide? That's what people are thinking,' says O'Neil. Monsanto has a reputation for cover-ups, stretching back to the days of Agent Orange and PCB poisoning. 'The public has not forgotten,' O'Neil remarks.

Not satisfied with suing the state of Vermont, which voted in favour of mandatory labelling, the pro-GM lobby is trying to push a measure through Congress that would prevent government agencies from ever imposing mandatory labelling in future.

The labelling issue has impacts that reach beyond the US. It is an important element in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations taking place between the US and European Union. 'US negotiators at the talks have been clear that one of their main aims is to increase market access for US agribusiness. They claim that Europe's GM labelling requirements are a barrier to trade,' says a report from Friends of the Earth Europe.²⁸

It continues: 'European safety standards for GM food are seen as much tougher than those in the US and the agriculture and biotech lobbies want to see those standards weakened.'

Up until recently, the EU banned most commercial growing of GM crops. But from January this year, member states can decide whether to maintain the ban or to opt out.²⁹ Britain's Conservative-led government is likely to want to opt out; it had already expressed a

desire to fast-track cultivation of Monsanto's Roundup Ready GM crops in Britain. Scotland and Wales have voted to remain GM free, but if the pro-lobby on both sides of the Atlantic has its way, GM crops could be grown in England and Northern Ireland by next year.

Saying no, saying yes

Across the world, resistance is growing. Hawaii, Ghana, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Brazil have in the past few months seen farmers, environmentalists, health organizations, women's groups and even some politicians standing up to the biotech giants and their supporters. (See 'The People vs Monsanto' and 'The farmer's friend'.)

Fed up with superweeds, declining yields and public concerns about GMOs, some US farmers are retreating from GM and returning to conventional methods.³⁰

The biggest area for potential growth for transgenic crops is now the Global South, especially Africa. Monsanto and the Gates Foundation (Bill Gates has \$23-million worth of shares in Monsanto) are trying to get African nations to accept GM foods and crops under the guise of aid. They may encounter more problems than they anticipate as African farmers and campaigners mobilize resistance, using authoritative international research that shows that agro-ecology and food sovereignty are the best way to alleviate rural poverty and the impacts of climate change.²

Meanwhile, geopolitics may not favour US biotech imperialism. China has taken a tough stance on US crop imports since they were found to contain corn with unapproved genetic modifications. Russia is no doubt suspicious of Monsanto's \$140-million non-GM corn seed factory project in Ukraine, stepped up since the conflict in that country started.³¹

When, in a few weeks' time, citizens take to the streets in hundreds of the world's towns to March Against Monsanto, or when they decide to buy organic food or clothing, they are not just saying 'no' to a powerful and hated transnational corporation. They are saying 'yes' to freedom, to the right to choose, to life in all its splendid natural diversity. And 'yes' to a food chain that belongs to humanity. ■

See Action on page 27.



970 million

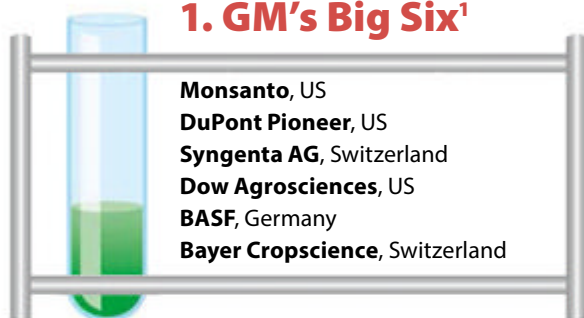
monarch butterflies (90% of the total population) have disappeared across the US thanks to Monsanto's Roundup.

Center for Food Safety
nin.tl/monsanto-butterfly-kill

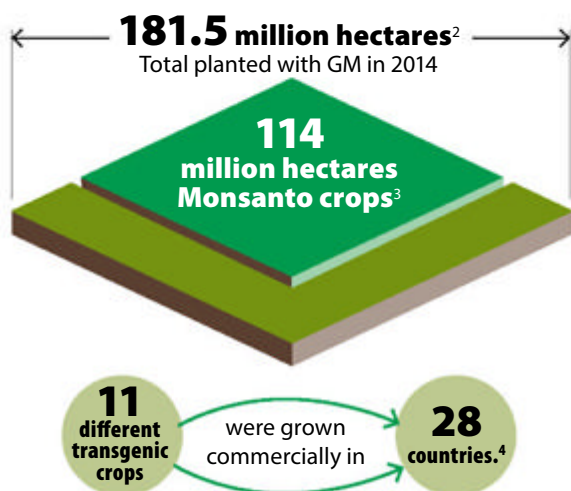
1 Monsanto blog nin.tl/1zDhstp **2** Friends of the Earth International/African Centre for Biosafety, 'Who benefits from GM crops?' 23 February 2015. **3** Monsanto nin.tl/17umYHj **4** Mark Lynas nin.tl/GM-safe **5** Fagan J, Antoniou M, Robinson C nin.tl/myths-and-truths **6** Séralini G-E et al, nin.tl/toxicity-Roundup and Malatesta M et al nin.tl/gm-soy-mice **7** Samsel A and Senneff S, nin.tl/gm-diseases **8** GM-Freeze, *Thin Ice*, Issue 34 July 2014. **9** Benedetti, D nin.tl/Brazil-soy-workers-damage **10** Michael Antoniou, lecture to Oxford Real Farming Conference, 6 January 2015. **11** GM-Watch nin.tl/no-scientific-consensus **12** *Guardian* nin.tl/big-international-study **13** Spyghana, nin.tl/monsanto-pulls-ad **14** Gurian-Sherman, D nin.tl/GE-failure-to-yield **15** USDA nin.tl/reuters-GMO-results-mixed **16** *Huffington Post* nin.tl/feed-the-world **17** Charles Benbrook nin.tl/gm-boosts-pesticide-use **18** *The Des Moines Register* nin.tl/superweeds-rampage **19** *Farm Futures* nin.tl/monsanto-dicamba **20** *Farm Progress* nin.tl/monsanto-crop-system **21** *Ecowatch* nin.tl/roundup-dangers **22** *Grist* nin.tl/superbugs-now **23** M-M Robin, *The World According to Monsanto*, The New Press, 2013. **24** GM Education nin.tl/monsanto-monopoly **25** *Huffington Post* nin.tl/fraley-organic-and-gmos **26** *Food Democracy Now* nin.tl/monsantos-government-links **27** Monsanto nin.tl/why-against-food-labelling **28** Friends of the Earth Europe, nin.tl/eu-us-trade-gmos-foee **29** *Deutsche Welle* nin.tl/eu-gmo-law **30** *Modern Farmer* nin.tl/post-GM-farming **31** *All About Feed* nin.tl/ukraine-monsanto-corn

FACTS: Monsanto... and Co

1. GM's Big Six¹



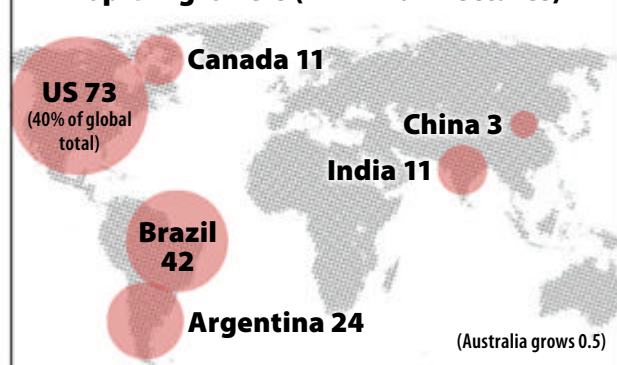
More than 10% of the world's croplands are planted with GM.



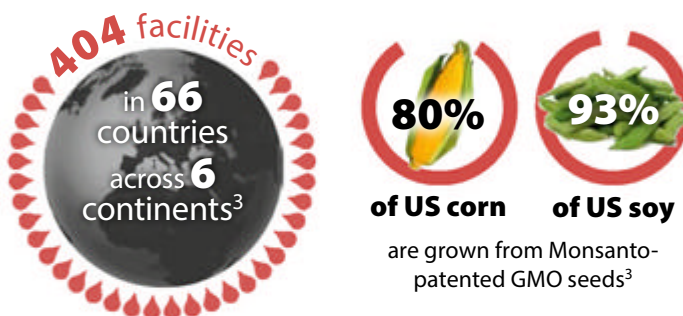
The four biggest GM crops worldwide are: **soy, cotton, corn/maize, canola/rapeseed**. Others include: sugarbeet, papaya, squash, tomato, red pepper, sugarbeet and aubergine/eggplant/brinjal.⁵



Top GM growers (in million hectares)⁵



2. Monsanto's global reach



1,676 patents on seeds, plants and other agricultural applications³



3. Money, money, money



\$2.74 billion net income for 2014.⁹

\$62.3 million spent by Monsanto on political lobbying in Washington between 2004-14.¹⁰



4. Monsanto and the law

Monsanto has made frequent use of the courts to defend its biotech patents.

\$23 million – the sum Monsanto has obtained from law suits against 400 farmers and against 56 small business people in the US alone for 'patent infringement'.³

But there have also been many cases against it. Recent ones include:

\$93 million finalized by West Virginia Supreme court (2014) to be paid to the town of Nitro by Monsanto for poisoning citizens with Agent Orange chemicals.¹¹

False advertising cases against Monsanto were upheld by French and US courts (2009) and the British regulator.¹²

\$1.5 million penalty imposed by US department of Justice in 2005 for bribing an Indonesian government official.¹³

\$2 million refund due to Brazilian farmers for Monsanto's illegal and unfair collection of soybean royalties, Brazilian Supreme Court ruled in 2012.¹⁴

¹ Biology Fortified nin.tl/GE-companies ² ISAAA nin.tl/global-biotech-2014 ³ Food & Water Watch nin.tl/monsanto-profile ⁴ Genewatch nin.tl/crops-grown ⁵ Genewatch nin.tl/crops-grown ⁶ Fast Co-exist nin.tl/food-you-eat ⁷ Environmental Working Group nin.tl/amount-americans-eat ⁸ St Louis Business Journal nin.tl/monsantos-business ⁹ Investigate Midwest nin.tl/net-income-2014 ¹⁰ Open Secrets nin.tl/monsantos-lobbying ¹¹ Natural Society nin.tl/poison-payout ¹² GM-Watch nin.tl/false-advertising ¹³ BBC News nin.tl/bribed-official ¹⁴ Nature nin.tl/unfair-royalties

Is Monsanto on the side of science?

Monsanto positions itself as a champion of science and GM supporters tar critics as 'anti-science'.*

But is this accurate?

CLAIRE ROBINSON looks at how scientists who investigate the safety of GM foods are treated.

When Australian scientist Judy Carman decided to carry out an animal feeding study with GM crops, she asked three GMO companies to supply seeds. One company didn't reply; another wanted the details of her study first. Monsanto sent her a legal document to sign stating that she would give the company the results of the study before publication. Carman said: 'We would have been legally bound to do that whether they gave us seeds or not. No sensible scientist would agree to such conditions, and we didn't.'

Scientists who want to find out if a GM crop is safe to eat or harms the environment need access to seeds of the GM variety as well as the non-GM parent (isogenic) variety it was developed from, grown in the same conditions. This way, any differences found in an experiment studying the effects of the GM crop and the non-GM control are known to be due to the genetic modification and not to some other factor, such as different growing conditions.

But Monsanto and other GMO companies restrict access to their seeds for independent researchers.^{1,2} Anyone who buys Monsanto's patented GM seed has to sign a technology agreement saying they will not use the seeds or crop for research or pass them to anyone else for that purpose.³ Even if permission to carry out research is given, companies typically retain the right to block publication if the results are 'not flattering', according to *Scientific American*.⁴

In the end, Carman used non-isogenic crops for the control pigs' diet, noting that GMO companies had claimed, and many government authorities had agreed, that the GM crops used were 'substantially equivalent' to non-GM crops. She found toxic effects in the



Alamy / Custom Medical Stock

GM-fed pigs – so the GM crops could not be substantially equivalent.⁵

The French scientist Gilles-Eric Seralini also had difficulty accessing seed for his rat-feeding study with Monsanto's GM maize NK603.⁶ No farmer wanted to risk breaching their technology agreement with Monsanto. Eventually a farm school agreed to grow the crops on condition it was not named, out of 'fear of reprisal' from Monsanto.⁷

Food writer Nathanael Johnson has claimed that since 2009 the problem of access to seeds has been 'largely fixed', due to research agreements being reached between GMO companies and certain universities.⁸ But to Carman's knowledge, these are 'commercial-in-confidence' research agreements to make new GMOs, not to test for safety. In any case, we are not permitted to see them to check what conditions are imposed on the researchers.

Scientists under attack

What's wrong with telling Monsanto about your research in advance? Scientists whose research has questioned the safety of GM crops claim to have suffered attacks on themselves and their studies. They say they fear that giving Monsanto notice of planned research will help attacks to be prepared in advance.

In some cases, pro-GMO scientists have tried to bully journal editors into not

*Oxford Farming Conference, nin.tl/mark-lynas; Gurian-Sherman D, nin.tl/science-dogma; Parry G, nin.tl/rise-anti-science

publishing the study, or retracting it after it has been published. In the 1990s the editor of *The Lancet* said he was threatened by a senior member of Britain's Royal Society that his job would be at risk if he published the research of Arpad Pusztai, a scientist at the Rowett Institute in Scotland. Pusztai's research had found toxic effects in rats fed GM potatoes.⁹ The editor published the paper anyway, but Pusztai was subjected to a campaign of vilification by pro-GMO scientific organizations and individuals in an attempt to discredit him and his research.¹⁰ He lost his job, funding and research team, and had a gagging order slapped on him which forbade him to speak about his research.^{11,12,13,14,15,16}

According to a former Rowett administrator, the campaign to silence Pusztai was set in motion by a phone call from Monsanto to US President Bill Clinton, who called British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who in turn called the Rowett Institute. A Rowett director said: 'Tony Blair's office had been pressured by the Americans, who thought our study would harm the biotechnology industry, and particularly Monsanto.'¹⁷ A similar smear campaign against a 2001 study that found GMO contamination in native Mexican maize was traced to Bivings Woodell, a PR company working for Monsanto.^{11,18}

The climate for independent researchers looking at GMO risks has not improved, though Monsanto and other GMO companies are less visible in attack campaigns – and may not need to be involved at all. They have plenty of foot-soldiers at universities and institutes to fight their battles without any apparent involvement on the part of the company, as the following examples of treatment of researchers show.

Gilles-Eric Seralini: In 2012 the French researcher published in *Food and Chemical Toxicology* a long-term two-year study which found liver and kidney damage in rats fed Monsanto GM maize and tiny amounts of the Roundup herbicide it is engineered to be grown with. As soon as the study was published, university-based scientists joined a vicious smear campaign against it.¹⁹ After a year of pressure and the appointment of a former Monsanto scientist to the journal's editorial board, the editor retracted the study.²⁰ The reason he gave was the supposed 'inconclusive' nature of some of the results.²¹ But David Schubert, a professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in California, commented: 'As a scientist, I can assure you that if this were a valid reason for retracting a publication, a large fraction of the scientific literature would not exist.'²² Seralini's study was later

**'Research on
GMOs is now
taboo... You
can't find
money for it...
It's the result
of widespread
fear of
Monsanto'**

**Gilles-Eric Seralini (second
from right) and his team.
They found liver and
kidney damage to rats fed
Monsanto's GM maize.**



republished by another journal.⁶

Many of Seralini's attackers had conflicts of interest with the GMO industry – but these were not made clear to the public.¹⁹ The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) also criticized the study, but it is not independent: over half of EFSA experts have been found to have conflicts of interest with the industries they regulate.^{23, 24}

Judy Carman: After Carman received government funding for a GMO feeding study, she suffered six personal attacks by pro-GMO scientists over a 10-year period. They attacked her through her university, alleging she was lying, bringing the university into disrepute, or defaming them. Carman said: 'It was clear to me that they wanted me sacked.'

Following the attacks, Carman says she was forced out of two successive university posts. She is fortunate not to need income from a university position, but points out that isn't true of most scientists: 'Any scientist in my shoes relying on a university income to eat or pay a mortgage would feel forced to stop investigating GMOs.'

Manuela Malatesta: The Italian researcher found that Monsanto's GM soy disturbed the functioning of the liver, pancreas and testes of mice.^{25,26,27,28} After she published her papers, she says she was forced out of her job at the university where she had worked for 10 years, and could not obtain funding to follow up her research. She commented: 'Research on GMOs is now taboo. You can't find money for it... People don't want to find answers to troubling questions. It's the result of widespread fear of Monsanto and GMOs in general.'¹⁷

Commenting on these cases, Michael Antoniou, a London-based molecular geneticist, says the normal scientific response to worrying findings is to design more experiments to get to the bottom of whether there really is a health concern or environmental impact. Yet in the area of GM crops and foods, this does not happen. Instead, Antoniou says, 'the GMO lobby attempts to discredit the study and the scientists who conducted it. It's despicable and unprecedented in the history of science.'

The corporate university

It's no surprise that many public scientists and organizations ally themselves with the GMO industry, as they rely heavily on industry funding. GMO companies have representatives on university boards and fund research, buildings and departments.²⁹ Monsanto has donated at least a million dollars to the University of Florida Foundation.^{30,31} Many US universities that do crop research are beholden to Monsanto.³² Some

academic scientists own GMO patents and are involved in spin-off companies that develop GM crops.³³

In Britain, the public institute Rothamsted Research counts Monsanto as a collaborator.³⁴ Monsanto reportedly sponsored the Rowett Institute prior to Pusztai's going public with his GM potato findings.^{17,35} Universities have become businesses and scientists have become entrepreneurs and salespeople.

Sponsorship of public institutions enables companies to steer research resources into areas that profit them. The companies develop patented GM crops in partnership with the institution and the institution generates research that, with its stamp of academic objectivity, can convince regulators of the safety or efficacy of GM crops. An added bonus for companies is a supply of scientists who are prepared to act as GMO advocates. They are often described only by their public affiliations, even though they and their institutions depend on GMO industry money.^{36,37}

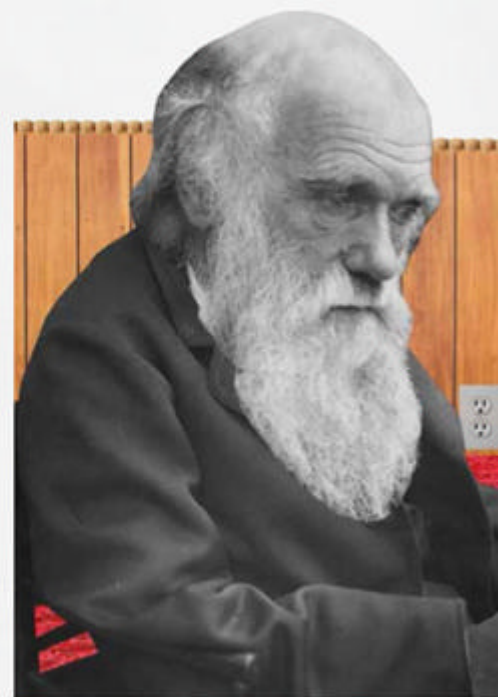
Is Monsanto on the side of science? The answer appears to be: 'Only if it can control and profit from it.' That runs counter to the spirit of scientific inquiry, which must be free to go wherever the data leads – however inconvenient it may prove to a company's bottom line. ■

Claire Robinson is the co-author with two genetic engineers of *GMO Myths and Truths*, available for free download at earthopen-source.org. She is an editor at GMWatch, a public news and information service on genetically modified crops and foods.

1 *Nature*, nin.tl/battlefield-scientist 2 *Nature Biotechnology*, nin.tl/Emily-Waltz 3 Monsanto nin.tl/Monsanto-agreement 4 *Scientific American*, nin.tl/seed-companies-control 5 Carman JA, Vlieger HR, Ver Steeg LJ, et al, nin.tl/pigs-study 6 Séralini G-E, Clair E, Mesnage R, et al, nin.tl/toxicity-Roundup 7 Séralini GE. *Tous Cobayes!* Paris, France: Flammarion; 2012. 8 Grist, nin.tl/kneejerk-GMO-debate 9 *Guardian*, nin.tl/editor-threatened 10 *Lancet*, Ewen SW, Pusztai A, nin.tl/effects-on-rats 11 Rowell A, *Don't Worry, It's Safe to Eat*, Earthscan, 2003. 12 Pusztai A, nin.tl/Pusztai-homepage 13 GM-Free, nin.tl/not-silent 14 *Powerbase*, nin.tl/Pusztai 15 *Daily Mail*, nin.tl/Blair-and-Bush 16 Verhaag B, nin.tl/scientists-attacked 17 Robin M-M, *The World According to Monsanto: Pollution, Corruption, and the Control of the World's Food Supply*, The New Press, 2013. 18 Monbiot G, nin.tl/fake-persuaders 19 Spinwatch, nin.tl/smelling-rat 20 Robinson C, Latham J, nin.tl/goodman-affair-monsanto 21 Hayes AW, nin.tl/hayes-letter 22 Schubert D, nin.tl/science-food-health 23 European Food Safety Authority, nin.tl/efsa-response 24 Corporate Europe Observatory, nin.tl/unhappy-meal 25 Vecchio L, Cisterna B, Malatesta M, Martin TE, Biggiogera M, nin.tl/gm-mice 26 Malatesta M, Caporaloni C, Gavaudan S, et al, nin.tl/gm-soy-mice 27 Malatesta M, Caporaloni C, Rossi L, et al nin.tl/gm-mice-2002 28 Malatesta M, Biggiogera M, Manuali E, Rocchi MBL, Baldelli B, Gazzanelli G, nin.tl/gm-mice-2003 29 Food & Water Watch, nin.tl/private-gain 30 University of Florida Foundation, nin.tl/uni-gm 31 University of Florida Foundation, nin.tl/monsanto-link 32 Iowa State University Foundation, nin.tl/monsanto-link 33 GeneWatch UK, nin.tl/monsanto-commercial 34 Rothamsted Research, nin.tl/monsanto-collaborators 35 Physicians and Scientists for Responsible Application of Science and Technology, nin.tl/scientist-sacked 36 *The Ecologist*, nin.tl/wheat-trial 37 Poulter S, Spencer B, nin.tl/disturbing-truth

Towards an understanding of the psychopathy of patient Monsanto

It is said that if a modern, successful corporation were a type of person, it would be a psychopath. With this in mind, JASON LOUV assesses 'Patient Monsanto'.



PATIENT NAME:

Monsanto

CONFIDENTIAL

An Evaluation of Psychopathic Traits in Patient MONSANTO (NYSE: MON)

From my confidential clinical records of psychoanalysis conducted with high-profile clients, password protected, for reference only.

Patient Monsanto (NYSE: MON – the ‘Entity’) was analysed over the course of several sessions, in which it presented itself as a disarmingly well-heeled and soft-spoken middle-aged man, wearing a cardigan and slacks – expensive, but not ostentatiously so – with a warm smile and firm handshake.

Entity is high functioning and eminently successful – a pillar of its community and a major asset to its shareholders; even invested in social responsibility and environmental programmes.

This, in itself, is not inconsistent with the psychopathic profile – the boldness, disinhibition and lack of empathy as defined in Christopher J Patrick’s triarchic model of psychopathy can often become assets in corporate settings, of which the patient is a master.¹

While its outward ‘mask’ maintains high conformance to social norms, over the course of our sessions this mask began to reveal fractures, apertures into the hidden self within.

As I worked to gain the trust of the Entity, it allowed me to see sustained flashes of its core, as the therapeutic

relationship developed and the Entity began to see that I would hold externally non-judgmental space for it to reveal its deeper motivators and complexes.

An Initial Evaluation of the NYSE: MON Entity on the Psychopath Checklist – Revised (PCL-R)

Facet 1: *Interpersonal*. The Entity meets all criteria for psychopathy, displaying immense glibness and superficial charm, representing itself as a slick transnational concerned with bettering humanity. This begins to merge into a grandiose sense of self-worth: the Entity, in fact, presents itself as nothing less than the saviour of humankind, working selflessly to end world hunger. The pathological lying present in the psychopathic mindset manifests in Entity’s repeated PR spinning of its actions.^{2,3,4}

The Entity is cunning, skilfully manipulating the world and even, in the end, itself with its games and ego projections.⁵

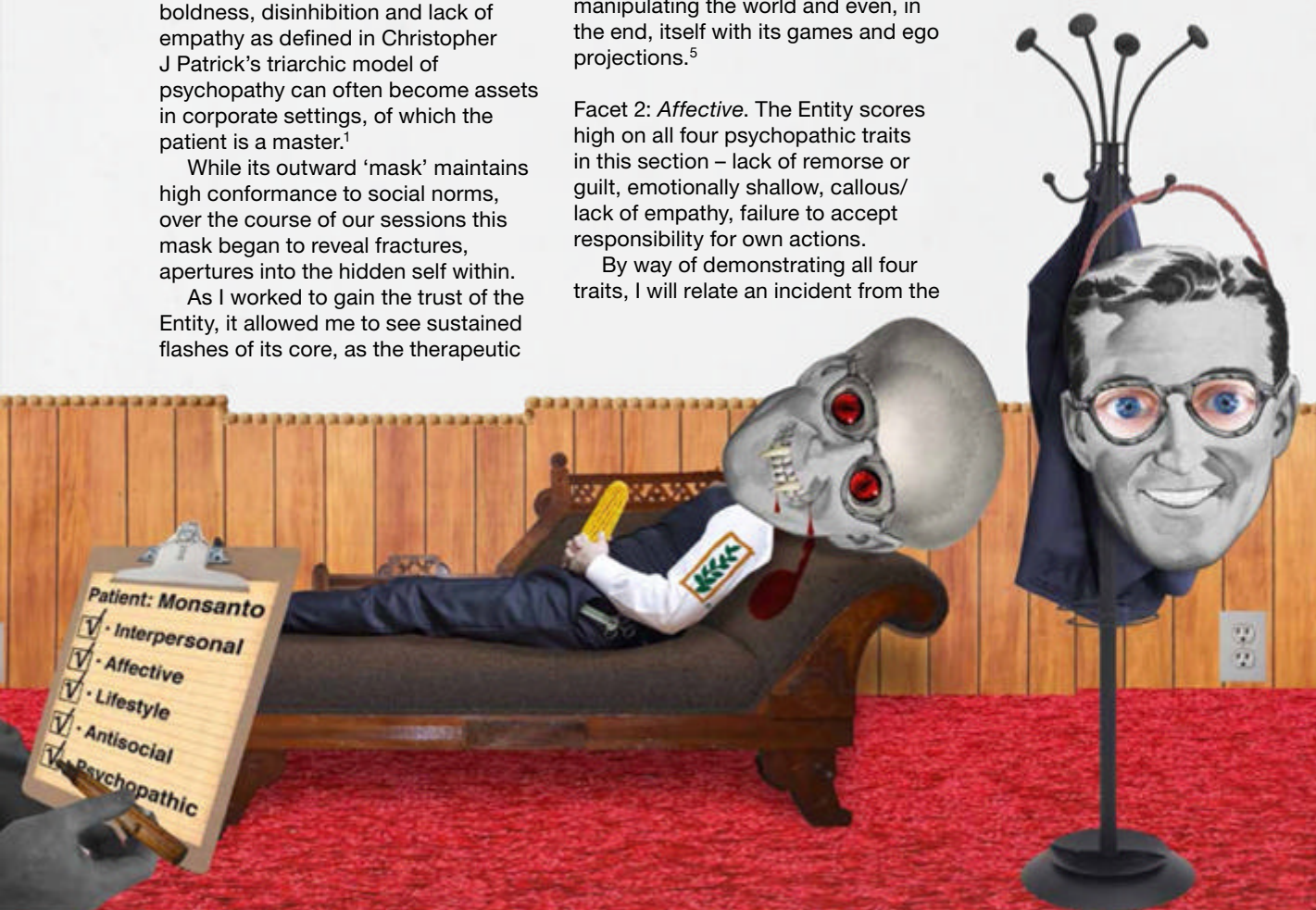
Facet 2: *Affective*. The Entity scores high on all four psychopathic traits in this section – lack of remorse or guilt, emotionally shallow, callous/lack of empathy, failure to accept responsibility for own actions.

By way of demonstrating all four traits, I will relate an incident from the

Entity’s case file: during the Vietnam War, Monsanto and accomplice Entity Dow Chemical produced the defoliant Agent Orange for the US Department of Defense. Between 1962 and 1971, 91 million litres of said substance and related compounds were sprayed over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to kill trees and vegetation so that Viet Cong soldiers could be shot from the air and peasants would flee the countryside into US-controlled areas.

Substance affected 3–4.8 million Vietnamese people, caused a reported 400,000 deaths, led to birth defects in up to 500,000 children, destroyed 17.8 per cent of the Vietnamese environment and created health problems or disabled a reported 1 million people, including US service personnel subsequently diagnosed with a wide range of cancers.

A 1984 class-action lawsuit on behalf of veterans affected by Agent Orange saw a \$180-million combined



Stephen Munday

CONFIDENTIAL

payout from seven Entities, of which 45 per cent was paid by Monsanto – to the outrage of veterans who wanted the matter settled in court and the Entity publicly held responsible. Once settled, the final payout to veterans came down to \$12,000 each, spread out over 10 years – a mere \$1,200 a year – with the caveat that accepting the payout would make them ineligible for their pensions, state assistance and food stamps, worth far more than \$1,200 a year. Most, therefore, accepted nothing at all. In 2004, Jill Montgomery, a spokesperson for the Entity, stated: 'We are sympathetic with people who believe they have been injured and understand their concern to find the cause, but reliable scientific evidence indicates that Agent Orange is not the cause of serious long-term health effects.'⁶

Facet 3: *Lifestyle*. The Entity's parasitic lifestyle (as a parasite on all nature), lack of realistic goals (supplanting all life on earth can hardly be considered realistic), impulsivity and irresponsibility (releasing its products into the environment with no care for their long-term affect on the biosphere) are manifest in its corporate policy over a sustained period of time.⁷

Facet 4: *Antisocial*. These traits – poor behavioural controls, early behavioural problems, juvenile delinquency, revocation of conditional release, criminal versatility – are applied to criminal psychopaths who fall foul of the law. The Entity, however, operates above the law, having seeded much of the US government with its former employees – including, among many others, Michael R Taylor (current Deputy Commissioner for Foods at the US Food and Drug Administration and previously Vice-President of Public Policy at the Entity)⁸; Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas (employed by the Entity in the 1970s)⁹ and ex-Monsanto lobbyist Islam Siddiqui, who was appointed US Government Chief Agriculture negotiator in 2011.¹⁰

I must here comment that this makes Entity an entirely new class of psychopath, one that breaks the

very framework for clinical evaluation. In fact, to speak of a psychopathic diagnosis is accurate but ultimately inadequate, for by its very existence the Entity appears to break the standard model by overturning the very social context in which psychopathy is enacted. Entity's actions represent not an isolated deviance from social order but are a desecration of the social order itself.

Example: I have treated many psychopathic individuals who started their careers with the torture of animals. Over the course of our sessions, however, the Entity revealed what struck me as systematic, procedural plans to torture all life – the biosphere itself.

Towards an Understanding of the Psychopathic Theology of the Entity

Through regular talk therapy, dream-work and analysis along Jungian lines, I soon discovered a consistent internal mythology. The Entity, now 114 years of age, sees life as a mistake – a stain on the perfect order of an otherwise inanimate cosmos. Life, for the Entity, leads to consciousness; consciousness, to self-awareness; self-awareness, inevitably, to chaos, sin, evil.

Like many in the modern nature-based religions, the Entity conceives of nature as a Goddess or Mother. This Primal Mother has created all life from its womb – and for the Entity, this is an unforgivable sin, and this Earth Goddess is therefore the incarnation of cosmic evil. Life is messy, full of suffering, pain, inefficiency, filth and waste – 'unclean' was the word the patient used, obsessively, like a mantra, conceiving of this Satanic Mother as a violated, violating and obese whore, who has given birth to the abomination of nature as a mass of slime.

The Entity resents its existence with absolute and blind rage; by extension, it loathes all life, all generation. This externalization of blame is also consistent with psychopathy: Life is a mistake, reasons the Entity, and therefore, to redeem this Cosmic Crime, it has become the cure – its actions are only expedient means to the end of

erasing the unsolvable, maddening riddle of existence.

'So innocent I was, once,' the Entity tells me as I record its words. 'Before I became aware. Before I saw the truth of this abattoir, this Earth Inferno. Picture the Great War, the trenches, the machine guns, the disease. The bacteria called Humankind proliferates to the limits of its cage, its 'Empires', and turns on itself in a flurry of butchery and torture. I knew then that there would be no end to this, never again: Life, without modification, is only a petri dish for suffering.'

'I knew what I was then: I am the cancer within the cancer. I am the tumour inside the cosmic parasite Life. Its cure.'

It spoke of carcinogens and poisons. DDT, PCBs, bovine growth hormone, Aspartame, Agent Orange, Roundup, GMOs. It spoke, gleefully, of the triggers it built for the atomic bombs dropped on Japan.

The subject narrates its dreams. It speaks of metastasized cathedrals of biological corrosion.

'The perfect predator am I. A new class of being, supplanting you on life's totem pole. No longer even a transnational corporation but a new, carnivorous God being born from the genetic mass of life itself.'

'Every day you take my eucharist. Genetically modified high fructose corn syrup, wheat, canola, cottonseed oil. My tendrils swim in you.'

'How much of you is me now? How many of your cells have been grown on my products? All of them, I should guess. All of them. Soon I shall replace all life on Earth with my genetically modified substance. And then shall I extinguish all. And then there shall only be silence. A silent rock in the void.'

I feel my veins. My client is in my veins. ■

Jason Louv is the author of *Monsanto vs the World: The Monsanto Protection Act, GMOs and Our Genetically Modified Future*, available at Amazon. @jasonlouv

CONFID

¹ Christopher J Patrick, nin.tl/cjpatrick ² BBC, Monsanto guilty in false ad row, nin.tl/false-ad ³ The Guardian, nin.tl/ads-slammed ⁴ GM Free Cymru nin.tl/false-advert ⁵ Sustainable Pulse, nin.tl/patent-fraud ⁶ Tom Fawthrop, Corpwatch, nin.tl/victims-sue ⁷ Organic Consumers Association, nin.tl/poison-people ⁸ Michael Taylor, Wikipedia, nin.tl/taylor-profile ⁹ Monsanto, nin.tl/monopoly-claims ¹⁰ Islam Siddiqui, Wikipedia, nin.tl/siddiqui-profile



Joerg Boethling / Alamy

The farmer's friend

'We are focused on empowering farmers,' says Monsanto. Many farmers have a quite different story to tell, finds DIONNE BUNSHA.

Farming was the only life that Dhanraj Pawar, a farmer from Maharashtra in central India, had ever known. His farm had been handed down through several generations of his family, and his life and aspirations were firmly rooted in his land. But last year, worn out and mired in debt, he threw down his plough, sold his ancestral land and quit.

Every sowing season, he had put his faith in the latest variety of Bt cotton seeds, hoping for the bountiful yields they promised. Developed by Monsanto, these genetically modified seeds justify their high cost by claiming to generate bumper harvests by guaranteeing protection from the deadly pest called the bollworm that can ravage the crop.

But these seeds were a bitter disappointment for Dhanraj. 'After 10 straight years of losses, I had to sell my buffalo and all my land,' he says. 'When I started using Bt seeds, expenses on

chemical fertilizers and pesticides soared. And the price of cotton is too low to make any profit.'

Now he plans to uproot his family and move to a nearby city to work as a daily wage labourer. Dhanraj may be bankrupt and landless but, ironically enough, he is a survivor. In what is the worst agricultural crisis in modern India's history, more than 296,400 cotton farmers have killed themselves in the past 20 years, according to National Crime Bureau Records.¹ Some have swallowed a bottle of pesticide, others have hanged themselves. A number of factors are at work in this heartbreaking story of farmer suicides – including the failure of agricultural banking, the loan sharks that take its place, and the unfair international trade regime.

While Bt cotton seeds are not solely responsible for the rise in suicides in India, they are far from the magic solution they are touted to be. 'There is a multiplicity of policies working against Indian cotton farmers, such as low prices, high costs, subsidized agriculture in the West, and the growth of seed monopolies,' says Vijay Jawandhia, a farmers' leader from Maharashtra. 'Even though yields have increased, farmers are making losses, because the price they get for their cotton is lower than it was 10 years ago, while farm expenses have multiplied.'

He points out that Bt cotton seeds are meant for irrigated farms. But more than 80 per cent of Indian agriculture is non-irrigated, so the seeds don't deliver the yields promised. 'This high-cost GM technology is only making agriculture more risky and farmers more vulnerable,' he says.

Bullied and short-changed

GM seeds are created by merging DNA from different species. The foreign genes may come from bacteria, viruses or other sources. The purpose of genetically modifying seeds is to create herbicide-, insect- and drought-tolerance, or crops with enhanced nutritional qualities.² Some GM seeds, like Bt cotton, contain toxins that kill bugs without having to spray pesticides that disturb the entire farm. However, pests have developed resistance, leading to increased use of pesticides and herbicides, and greater damage to the environment.³

Monsanto, which pioneered the use of genetically modified seeds, describes itself as a 'sustainable agriculture company'. It proclaims: 'We are focused on empowering farmers – large and small – to produce more from their land while conserving more of our world's natural resources such as water and energy.'⁴

But farmers across the world have a strikingly different story to tell. Far from being empowered or sustained, they feel bullied and short-changed by Monsanto's

'Farmers feel bullied and short-changed by Monsanto's products and its aggressive methods to enforce its seed patents'

continued on page 26

1 The bee all and the end all

Ari Helminen under CC Licence
A small group of Mexican beekeepers inflicted a blow on biotech giant Monsanto, halting the company's ambitions to plant thousands of hectares of GM soybeans. A district judge in the state of Yucatán overturned a government permit issued to Monsanto that allowed commercial planting of the company's Roundup Ready soybeans over 253,000 hectares. The judge was convinced by the scientific evidence presented about the threats posed by GM soy crops to honey production. These include the use of glyphosate pesticide and environmental damage to soil, water and bee colonies. The important European export market for Mexican honey would also suffer if the honey became contaminated with GM pollen, the judge heard.
fooddemocracynow.org
nin.tl/bee-victory



2 Campesinos aren't criminals

Jorge Silva / Reuters
Ten days of widespread protest by an alliance of indigenous people, trade unions, farmers' and women's associations did the trick. In September 2014, the Guatemalan Congress overturned the country's hated 'Monsanto law'. This would have made criminals of farmers who cultivate corn and beans originating from natural seeds. If these natural seeds had become contaminated by GM patented seeds as a result of insect pollination or wind, the farmers would have had to buy a licence for seed from a corporation like Monsanto, or face legal proceedings.
intercontinentalcry.org
nin.tl/guatemala-wins



3 Not your tomatoes

epSos.de under CC Licence
Thanks to sharp-eyed European activists, Monsanto was stripped of a patent for tomatoes by the European Patent Office in December 2014. The No Patents on Seeds! coalition had spotted a cleverly worded patent that was enabling Monsanto to claim as a new GM invention tomatoes that already had a natural resistance to a fungal disease called botrytis. 'Revoking this patent is an important success,' said Cristoph Then from No Patents on Seeds! 'It was more or less based on a combination of fraud, abuse of patent law and biopiracy. The patent could have been used to monopolize important genetic resources.'
nin.tl/fraud-tomatoes

The People vs Monsanto (and other GM giants)

**Is the tide turning against GM?
Here are just a few of
the many groups and
individuals standing up
to the biotech bullies.**



4 A motherload of protest

momsacrossamerica.com under CC Licence
Zen Honeycutt is the mother of three children, one of whom has life-threatening allergies. She found that allergy and autism symptoms lessened when she fed her children organic food and avoided GMOs and pesticides. In 2012 she founded Moms Across America to connect with mothers who had had similar experiences. Within 18 months the mothers had held over 400 events in what had become a nationwide campaign for freedom from GMOs. In January this year Honeycutt was one of a handful of activists who managed to speak at Monsanto's annual shareholders meeting. She told CEO Hugh Grant: 'I'm imploring you to choose a new direction. Stop poisoning our children.' At the same meeting digital activists Sum-of-Us submitted a shareholder resolution calling for Monsanto's CEO to be accountable to an independent chair of the board of directors – rather than just himself. And As You Sow demanded disclosure of lobbying payments.
momsacrossamerica.com

5 Rumbling the bio-smugglers

foodsovereigntyghana.org under CC Licence
'My grandfather would be spinning in his grave,' writes Pamela Boakye. She comes from a farming family and supports the movement of farmers, fishers and campaigners against the introduction of a Plant Breeders Bill (aka the 'Monsanto Law') in her native Ghana. This would prohibit traditional farmers saving and exchanging seed and force them to buy or pay royalties to seed corporations like Monsanto. Attempts to smuggle the bill through parliament during the World Cup were rumbled by farmers, fishers and campaigners who mobilized under the banner Food Sovereignty Ghana. International support has come from groups like the British charity Global Justice Now, whose email campaign got 80 British MPs to pledge not to back the 'Monsanto Law' which derives from the British- and US-backed New Alliance for Food and Security Programme. The battle is not over, though.
[Global Justice Now nin.tl/ghana-monsanto-law](http://GlobalJusticeNow.nin.tl/ghana-monsanto-law) and nin.tl/monsanto-seed-law

6 Aussie organic farmer battles on

chuffed.org under CC Licence
Steve Marsh is an Australian organic farmer who has the guts to take on Monsanto and keep fighting – against all odds but with a growing number of supporters. Steve comes from a farming community in Kojonup, Western Australia. In 2010, the state government lifted the ban on GM canola (rapeseed). Steve's neighbour started growing Monsanto canola, some of which was blown onto Steve's fields. This resulted in 70-per-cent contamination and Steve lost his organic certification. Monsanto gets a no-liability agreement signed with every GM farmer and so takes no responsibility in such cases. Steve decided to fight for his right to farm GM-free and took the matter to court. He lost his case in May 2014 and is now liable for hundreds of thousands of dollars of legal costs and fees. But he has lodged an appeal, with Australia's Food Foundation running a fundraising and support campaign for this important test case.
safefoodfoundation.org
nin.tl/help-chris-marsh

7 A thorn in their side

newint.org under CC Licence
Vandana Shiva has for many years carried the torch for biodiversity, seed and food sovereignty and opposed the monopolizing drive of corporations like Monsanto. Her repeated assertions that Monsanto's seed patents are impoverishing Indian farmers has put her in the firing line on many an occasion. Responding to a 'character assassination piece' by journalist Michael Specter in the *New Yorker* in 2014, Shiva said: 'Ever since I sued Monsanto in 1999 for its illegal Bt cotton trials in India, I have received death threats, my websites have been hacked and turned into porn sites, the chairman of a girls' college founded by my grandfather has been harassed. Actions have been taken to impede the work of Navdanya [a network of seed savers and organic producers] by attempting to bribe my colleagues to leave – and they have failed.'
[Vandana Shiva nin.tl/answers-back](http://VandanaShiva.nin.tl/answers-back)

continued from page 23

products and its aggressive methods to enforce its seed patents. Farmers in Guatemala, Mexico and Ghana are part of growing resistance to Monsanto and GM. Organic growers in the US, Canada and Australia are fighting against contamination of their fields and destruction of their livelihood by GM crops from neighbouring farms or wind drift.

So, why don't farmers boycott Bt? Why does GM cotton dominate the market? As Monsanto itself points out, 'If Bt cotton were a root cause of suicidal tendencies, why do Indian farmers represent the fastest-growing users of biotech crops in the world?'⁵

Farmer Dhanraj Pawar has an answer: 'There is no other seed available in the market. Before Bt seeds, we used hybrid seeds. But we can't find the old seeds in the shops any more,' he says.

'Monsanto has tied up with state governments and local seed companies that distribute its patented seeds, while they collect the royalties,' explains Kavitha Kuruganti, an activist with the Alliance for Sustainable & Holistic Agriculture (ASHA). 'That's how they have monopolized the seed market.'

Having friends in high places helps. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Clinton Global Initiative, and the US Agency for International Development, all partner with Monsanto and encourage the use of their seeds in the Global South, especially in Africa. But farmers' organizations are not easily taken in. In Burkina Faso, the National Union of Agropastoral Workers (Syntapa) is battling against Bt cotton and biofortified sorghum because they have impoverished farmers and had adverse effects on the environment.⁶ While the cost of Bt cotton seed in Burkina Faso has tripled, there has been no increase in yields, according to Syntapa leader Ousmane Tiendrébéogo.⁶ 'The government has every interest in encouraging GM in order to continue to attract funders and international donors like the US, which make their development aid conditional on the adoption of GMOs,' says Tiendrébéogo.⁶

Several governments have proposed new laws that restrict farmers from saving, breeding and bartering seeds on which they rely. Some, including Ghana and Canada, are attempting to change their laws in line with the 1991 Act of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants. This is supposed to help protect plant variety and to encourage plant breeders to develop new varieties. However, farmers and campaigners see this as strengthening corporate control over seed patents, while disempowering the rights of farmers to save seeds, which may result in further losses of biodiversity.⁷ Around 75 per cent of plant genetic diversity has vanished since

the 1900s, as farmers have abandoned their local seed varieties for genetically uniform, high-yielding varieties, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization.⁸

Taking farmers to court

In the West, pro-corporate patent laws have been used against several family-run farms. The Canadian farmer couple Percy and Louise Schmeiser became icons of the anti-GM movement when they received a lawsuit notice from Monsanto in 1998 accusing them of patent infringement for cultivating Monsanto's Roundup Ready canola (rapeseed) without a licence. They said that they had never bought Monsanto seed nor intended to have it on their land. Monsanto seeds inadvertently reached their farm either from their neighbour's farm or from passing trucks. But Monsanto stated that Schmeiser was a 'patent infringer' who knowingly planted this seed in his field and used Monsanto's patented technology without permission or licence.⁹ When Monsanto sued the Schmeisers for damages of up to \$400,000, the couple fought the case in the Canadian Supreme Court. Eventually, the court ruled that while the Schmeisers had infringed on Monsanto's patent, they did not have to pay damages since they had not in any way benefited from the seeds.

Monsanto has filed 145 lawsuits against farmers since 1997 in the United States alone.¹⁰ The company says filing these cases is necessary because the loss of revenue hinders investment in research and development to create new products to help farmers.¹⁰ In order to prevent further litigation against small farmers, the Organic Seed Growers & Trade Association filed a case against Monsanto in 2011 to prohibit Monsanto from filing lawsuits against organic farmers whose farms may have been contaminated by Monsanto's seeds.¹¹ The court rejected the organic growers' case, stating they had no reason to try to block Monsanto from suing them since the company had given its assurance that it would not file lawsuits against organic growers if GM seeds accidentally mix in with organics.¹¹ Monsanto states that two separate courts in 2012-13 acknowledged that Monsanto took no action against organic growers for crosspollination.¹²

Though Monsanto often appears to have the law on its side, in Brazil there have been rulings against it. Around five million Brazilian soybean farmers sued the agrochemical giant for charging excessive royalties on crops planted using seed from the previous year's harvest.¹³ The company justifies its royalties by saying it reinvests \$2.6 million a day in research and development 'that ultimately benefits farmers and consumers'.

But in 2012, the court ruled in favour of the Brazilian farmers, saying Monsanto owes farmers



95% of Indian cotton is grown from Monsanto's patented Bt cotton seed.

Global Research Center
nin.tl/Bt-cotton-rules-India

230% price hike for soy seed 2000-10 – as GM soy took over the US market.

GM Education
nin.tl/monsanto-monopoly

The following organizations give advice and information, and campaign on GM, food safety and sovereignty:

INTERNATIONAL
March Against Monsanto
23 May 2015
march-against-monsanto.com
Global GMO Free Coalition
gmofreeglobal.org

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND
GE-Free New Zealand
gefree.org.nz
Soil and Health Association
organicnz.org.nz

arrears of around \$2 billion in lieu of the excess royalty charged to them since 2004.¹³ Monsanto reached an agreement with the farmers to end the litigation.¹³ Later, however, Monsanto asked soy exporters in Brazil to collect royalties on the company's behalf so that it did not miss out on royalties from seeds that are being reused.¹⁴ Brazilian traders have been reluctant to do so, leading to growing tension between them and Monsanto. When farmers lost their crop to a pest attack despite using Monsanto's pest-resistant corn seeds, the Association of Soybean and Corn Producers of Mato Grosso region asked Monsanto and other seed producers to reimburse them for money spent on additional pesticides.¹⁵

Maui fights back

The most impressive victory against Monsanto has been in Maui, Hawaii, in November 2014, when residents voted in favour of a temporary ban on the farming of GM crops. This will hold until Maui county conducts an analysis of the health effects of genetically modified farming and foods.¹⁶

Monsanto and Dow Chemical conduct field trials of genetically modified crops in Maui and also grow engineered seed for commercial purposes. This has created several problems, including chemical pollution, birth defects, surface water contamination and glyphosate (the active ingredient in Monsanto's 'Roundup' seeds) toxicity in residents, according to the website of the Sustainable Hawaiian Agriculture for the Keiki and the 'Aina (SHAKA) Movement which led the campaign

for the moratorium. Monsanto and Dow Chemicals spray over 80 chemicals on their GMO fields in Maui, which is unregulated by the US Environment Protection Agency, according to the SHAKA Movement.¹⁷

'The moratorium protects small farmers from having to use more and stronger chemicals to control the newly resistant weeds and insects being created in and around neighbouring GMO fields,' says the website of the SHAKA Movement. Crops were contaminated by unwanted GM crops and the farmers were sued for patent infringement.¹⁷ Monsanto and Dow are fighting the ban.¹⁸

Across the world, farmers who have felt the fallout of GM seeds have staged valiant resistance movements against the biotech giant, despite the odds. Yet Monsanto's monopoly keeps growing and its markets expanding. 'The farmer is always in search of the next miracle. Monsanto's marketing appeals to that vulnerability,' says Maharashtra farmers' leader Vijay Jawandhia. 'Why do people still buy the lottery? We are always hoping.' ■

Dionne Bunsha is an award-winning journalist and editor, working in Mumbai and Vancouver.

1 P Sainath nin.tl/maha-suicides **2** Monsanto nin.tl/monsanto-safety **3** David Suzuki.org nin.tl/understand-gmo **4** Monsanto nin.tl/monsanto-who **5** Monsanto blog nin.tl/suicide-bottom **6** GM-watch nin.tl/burkina-faso-gmo **7** FAO nin.tl/biodiversity-loss **8** FAO nin.tl/biodiversity-fao **9** Monsanto nin.tl/percy-schmieser **10** Monsanto nin.tl/sue-farmers **11** Reuters nin.tl/monsanto-organic-lawsuit **12** Monsanto nin.tl/gm-seed-accident **13** Russia Today nin.tl/monsanto-brazil **14** Reuters nin.tl/brazil-exporters **15** Russia Today nin.tl/farmers-refund **16** Bloomberg nin.tl/maui-bans-GMO **17** SHAKA nin.tl/shaka-resist **18** Natural Society nin.tl/bully-biotech

AUSTRALIA

Safe Food Foundation
safefoodfoundation.org

GM-Free Australia
gmfreeaustralia.org.au
Organic Federation of Australia ofa.org.au

BRITAIN

GM-Freeze gmfreeze.org
GMWatch gmwatch.org
GM Education gmeducation.org
GeneWatch UK genewatch.org
Beyond GM beyond-gm.org
GM-FreeCymru
gmfreecymru.org.uk
GM-free Scotland
gmfreescotland.blogspot.co.uk
Soil Association
soilassociation.org

CANADA

Canadian Biotechnology Action Network cban.ca
Non-GMO Sourcebook
nin.tl/non-gmo-source-book
Canadian Organic Growers
cog.ca

IRELAND

GM-free Ireland
facebook.com/GMfreeIreland

UNITED STATES

Center for Food Safety
centerforfoodsafety.org
Food Democracy Now
fooddemocracynow.org
Food & Water Watch
foodandwaterwatch.org
Organic Consumers Association
organicconsumers.org

Non-GMO Shopping Guide

(Institute of Responsible Technology)
nongmoshoppingguide.com



BOOKS and FILMS

GMO Myths and Truths by John Fagan, Michael Antoniou and Claire Robinson, Excellent resource, updated 2014. Free download available from nin.tl/gm-myths-and-truths

The World According to Monsanto by Marie-Monique Robin (The New Press, 2013) and as a documentary nin.tl/world-according-monsanto

Monsanto vs The World by Jason Louv (Ultraculture Press, 2013)

The Seeds of Deception by Jeffrey Smith, a classic (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2003) plus website seedsofdeception.com

GMO OMG documentary film by Jeremy Seifert gmofilm.com

To avoid GM, buy products labelled 'organic' or 'non-GM'; in the case of US products, buy only '100% organic'.

ACTION!
What can I do?

Malawi

Malawi entered 2015 with much of the country under floodwater. As ever, the real disaster results not from the weather – the low-lying south has always been flood prone – but the continued lack of resilience on the part of Malawi's people, more than half of whom live in poverty. In a country where 40 per cent of the government's budget is funded out of aid, the disaster response was led, almost inevitably, by foreign agencies.

Ask Malawians why their government continues to be unable to protect its citizens and their answer will usually be corruption. It is little more than a year since the 'cashgate' scandal emerged. This was a murky tale involving deleted records on the government computer, car boots full of cash and the murder of a finance official. This, and the resultant suspension of foreign aid, no doubt contributed to the electoral defeat last year of Joyce Banda, the country's first woman president, whose succession in 2012 had been a moment of hope.

Malawians increasingly associate corruption and poverty with the democratic system that was established some 20 years ago. But to understand the roots of contemporary problems, it is important to dig back a little further.

The diminutive figure of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda still casts a long shadow over the country that he led for 30 years.

The second, multiparty republic inaugurated in 1994 was founded on a rejection of Banda's brutal personalized dictatorship. Yet the country continues to grapple with his disastrous economic legacy, even as some politicians hark back to the supposedly golden years of Kamuzu's rule.

Shortly after independence from Britain in 1964 Banda seized sole power and began three decades of repression. He also adopted an economic model that still has disastrous consequences. His ambition was to make Malawi the 'Denmark of Africa', with large-scale agriculture providing export earnings to fund a social-democratic paradise. In this he had the backing of the World Bank, long after that institution had begun promoting smallholder agriculture elsewhere in Africa.

The consequence was a massive alienation of peasant land for the creation of large estates, owned either by foreign companies or members of the elite. Most ordinary Malawians did not have enough land to support themselves as farmers and were compelled to work as labourers on the large estates.

The approach was a disaster, inappropriate not only socially but climatologically. Malawi has only one rainy season a year. Agriculture must be carefully tailored to these

conditions. In practice, the opposite has occurred, resulting in lasting environmental damage.

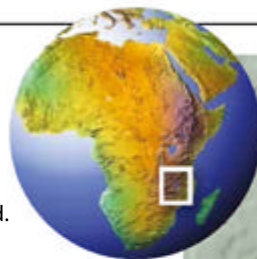
The past two decades of democratic rule in Malawi have delivered a system in which political rights are generally respected and governments have changed peacefully, if acrimoniously. The post-dictatorship governments have generally been deeply corrupt – yet so was Dr Banda's. The difference was an absence of free press or opposition parties to expose corruption to public view.

Malawi has an even older legacy than the eccentric Dr Banda that may yet shape its future. Going right back to a rising against colonial rule in 1915, the country has had a strong radical tradition. Banda himself capitalized on this to gain power and then suppressed it fiercely. The beginning of the end of his regime was signalled by popular working-class uprising in 1992. Nearly 20 years later, President Bingu wa Mutharika was confronted with a similar upsurge of popular urban revolt.

Some observers have concluded from Malawi's repressive past that its people are passive and will not confront oppression. The evidence suggests that the opposite is in fact true – and that perhaps one day they will enjoy the government that they deserve. ■

Richard Carver

At a glance



Leader: President Peter Mutharika.

Economy: GNI per capita \$270 (Zambia \$1,480, UK \$39,110). This is currently the lowest GNI per capita in Africa and therefore the world. *Monetary unit:* Kwacha.

Main exports: Tobacco and other agricultural produce (sugar, cotton, coffee, nuts, wood).

Population: 16.4 million. People per square kilometre 138 (UK 260). Annual population growth rate 1990-2013 2.4%.

Health: With more than 1.1 million people living with HIV, Malawi has a prevalence rate of some 10% – in the top 10 countries in the world. Despite having had a physician as head of government for 30 years, Malawi's healthcare system remains chronically underdeveloped. Infant mortality 44 per 1,000 live births (Zambia 56, UK 4). Lifetime risk of maternal death 1 in 34 (UK 1 in 6,900).

Environment: Deforestation caused by estate agriculture and the need for firewood has caused immense damage, rendering the rural poor especially vulnerable to the impact of both drought and flooding.

Religion: Approximately 80% Christian (Catholics and Presbyterians are the largest denominations), with the remainder mainly Muslim.

Languages: English and Chichewa (official); also Chilomwe, Chiyao, Chitumbuka and others.

Human Development Index: 0.414, 174th of 187 countries (Zambia 0.561, UK 0.892)





Clockwise from left: A girl carrying a little child plays with fish on Mikoma beach, Lake Malawi; checking nets after a busy night's fishing at the same location; making grateful use of the shade in the village of Nkhoma; a billboard advertising Life Guard condoms in the capital, Lilongwe – 1 in 10 Malawian adults is HIV-positive. Photos by Kieran Dodds/Panos Pictures.

Star ratings Previously profiled November 2003



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★
51% live below the national poverty line and 62% on less than \$1.25 a day while the elite live in relative luxury.
2003 ★



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★
55 years (Zambia 57, UK 80).
2003 ★



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★
Malawi is a traditional society in which women still play a subordinate role. Women's proportion of seats in parliament declined from 22% to 16% at the last election but there was a female head of state between 2012 and 2014.
2003 ★★★



LITERACY ★★
61%. Primary-school net enrolment ratio 97%.
2003 ★★



FREEDOM ★★★★★
Although popular protests were suppressed with violence in 2011, the human rights guarantees established in the 1990s are generally respected. Political parties organize freely and there is a vibrant, if often unprofessional, press. The judiciary is generally independent and there are no political prisoners.
2003 ★★★★★



SEXUAL MINORITIES ★★
Same-sex sexual activity is illegal. In 2012 President Joyce Banda suspended the implementation of anti-gay laws and in July 2014 the government promised a review of all such laws.

NI assessment

POLITICS ★★★

Malawi's democratic governments have all had honeymoon periods that faded quickly. Bakili Muluzi headed the country's first democratic government, but soon became a byword for corruption. Bingu wa Mutharika put in place economic reforms in the mid-2000s, before subsiding into authoritarianism and economic disaster. Joyce Banda promised clean government and an emancipatory ideal for women, only to be thrown out in the aftermath of 'cashgate'. Mutharika's brother Peter has not been long in office, but experience suggests that the cycle of disappointment will not be much different.

★★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★★ GOOD
★★★ FAIR
★★ POOR
★ APPALLING

Should voting b

MATHEW LAWRENCE and URI

YES



MATHEW LAWRENCE is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research, where he works on issues relating to political economy and democratic reform. His most recent publication was *De-financialisation: a democratic reformation of finance* (2014).

Mathew

Democracies across the world risk becoming gerontocracies: government, increasingly for the grey vote, by the grey vote. In the recent US mid-term elections, for example, 18 to 29-year-olds constituted just 13 per cent of the electorate; while in the UK's last general election, the turnout rate for a typical 70-year-old was 36 per cent higher than for a typical 20-year-old.

Profound inequalities in electoral participation are also evident by class; UK voters in the highest income bracket were 43 per cent more likely to vote than those in the bottom fifth income group, a five-fold increase since the 1980s. Many other European countries have experienced a similar surge in turnout inequality.

The consequences for democracy and economic equality are dire. Politics becomes tilted in favour of high-turnout groups, usually older and wealthier voters, reinforcing a cycle of disaffection and disengagement among the politically marginalized and aiding the one per cent in the process.

Tinkering around the edges won't revive the idea of democracy as a whole way of life, where each citizen's interest must be accounted for. To arrest the hollowing-out of democracy, voting should be made a civic duty for first-time voters, with compulsory attendance at the ballot box.

This doesn't compel you to vote for a political party – there would be a 'none of the above' option. Nor does it preclude working to build up more participatory, direct and non-hierarchical forms of democratic life; compulsory first-time voting is one step among many required to revive moribund democracies. However, it will ensure those with the least political voice now have a far greater say in how we are governed in the future, making our democracies more representative, responsive and pluralistic.

The alternative – widening political inequality that entrenches and extends yawning economic and power inequalities – is surely something neither of us want.

Uri

We live in a time when the last pretences of elected governments to serve their citizens are falling away. A decade ago, Western democracies invaded Iraq on a fraudulent

pretext, deaf to the protests of millions. Today, they push bailouts and austerity on us while dismissing the uproar at those who caused the crisis. Freedom of speech has become the right to be ignored.

Yet it is an error to see this as a weakening of democracy. It is not that the people's sovereignty has been surrendered to transnationals, or that the arms-and-oil coalition is getting the better of our representatives. The state – every state – has always served the rich and powerful. Far from

'Who votes matters. Our electorates are getting older and richer, with our politics responding as a result. Non-voters have disproportionately borne the brunt of austerity'
– Mathew

'going off course', democracies are simply being exposed for the sham they have always been.

Elections are a periodic ritual intended to reinforce the illusion of popular rule. In fact, they only shuffle around the administrators of capitalism. My hunch is that young people are not voting precisely because they are on to this, however viscerally. Talk of youth apathy is misguided – it does not explain why young people volunteer at similar rates to the population average, or their over-representation in activist movements. What we see here is savviness and a healthy cynicism that deserve to be taken seriously.

In this context, requiring people to vote amounts to compelling them to pledge allegiance to a system they distrust. This is not education for civic duty – it is the perpetuation of a lie. Our strategy as egalitarians should be to accentuate the crisis in the system, even as we build alternatives from below – not to help save it from itself.

Mathew

Real change will require enduring struggle. A politics of ephemeral protest while waiting on systemic apocalypse is not enough; after all, Wall Street is occupied again, but now

e compulsory?

GORDON go head to head.

by organized money, and crisis is usually accompanied by retaliation, not revolution.

Electoral politics is one such existing avenue of struggle, however imperfect. Using the ballot box does not equate to consenting to the legitimacy of the status quo. The answer is not that we shouldn't vote, but that not enough do. Social democratic and progressive parties around the world have improved societies far more than those who dogmatically refuse to engage with the present system. Surely we agree there is a world of difference between

'Requiring people to vote amounts to compelling them to pledge allegiance to a system they distrust. This is not education for civic duty – it is the perpetuation of a lie' – Uri

Syriza and Golden Dawn? There is something deeply conservative and defeatist in not recognizing that, nor the role voting played in Syriza's eventual victory.

You're right that the savviness and healthy cynicism of young people is too quickly dismissed as apathy. However, a civil duty to vote in their first election could translate their political energy into enduring pressure for change in the present, and defend better the past gains of collective political action.

Democracy is, of course, about much more than elections or representative government. However, they remain central to it. Given that, it makes sense to ensure those most disenfranchised presently are those most represented in future – and that abstention is replaced by the full mobilization of the people in democratic life.

Uri

We do seem to be poles apart, but you could at least avoid straw men and caricatures: nowhere was I arguing for dogmatic abstention from voting, nor do I promote ephemeral protest and waiting as political strategies.

My argument against making voting compulsory does rest on a principled rejection of the state. But this doesn't mean that I

necessarily object to any tactical use of the ballot. Upcoming elections in my native Israel come to mind: some of my anarchist friends will be voting, if merely to strengthen the remains of the opposition against creeping fascism. It may even be possible for an elected leftist government to ameliorate the worst excesses of capitalism, even if post-War history has shown us that a military coup often follows (and here I genuinely fear for Greece).

But all this is a far cry from the idea that elections should be forced on people, or that they must express their preferences within prescribed channels, whatever other action they take. One of the most positive trends in Western society is the abandoning of the politics of demand towards a far deeper opposition to the very principle of hierarchical governance. Compulsory voting works against that trend. It is not a gateway drug to active citizenship – it is a sleeping pill.

From the occupation of buildings, workplaces and farms to radical co-operatives, local exchange schemes and neighbourhood assemblies, there are hundreds of ways to erode the top-down apparatus that surrounds us, and carve out as much autonomy as we can. To be sure, we will need to defend it from both co-optation and repression. But self-management and mutual aid – not compulsory voting – are our best bet if we want to end capitalism. Do you?

Mathew

The question at hand is not how to end capitalism – though we clearly disagree about how best to achieve systemic change – but how to strengthen the legitimacy of mass electoral democracy. Compulsory voting will not achieve the former; it might well help revive the latter.

This matters, for who votes matters. Our electorates are getting older and richer, with our politics responding as a result. Entrenched political inequality reinforces wider social and economic hierarchies; for example, non-voters – generally poorer and younger – have disproportionately borne the brunt of austerity.

Compulsory voting is neither a sleeping pill nor a gateway drug. However, it is a mechanism for a slightly more democratic society, where those most marginalized are guaranteed to have their voices heard, electorally at least.

NO



URI GORDON is a lecturer in Political Theory at Loughborough University and co-convenor of the Anarchist Studies Network. An Israeli-born activist and academic, he authored *Anarchy Alive!: Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (Pluto Press, 2008).

Moreover, the option to vote for ‘none of the above’ would provide people with an opportunity to publicly register a rejection of the status quo.



Was Emma Goldman right to claim ‘if voting changed anything they’d make it illegal’?

Hunter S Thompson once said of voting, ‘It ain’t much, but it’s the only weapon we have against the Greedheads.’ He was half-right. As you’ve articulated, there are many, often better, forms of political and social action to reduce hierarchy outside of elections. However, voting remains an expression of political equality – one person, one vote, without distinction – that can help build a fairer society. Given the illegitimate political and economic hierarchies confronting us, a civic duty to vote in your first election is one more, much-needed, weapon for overcoming present inequalities.

Uri

‘To strengthen the legitimacy of mass electoral democracy’ – this is precisely where we disagree. This discredited system does not need rescuing; it needs to be abolished.

We may have one person, one vote, but everybody knows that real political influence comes with pounds and dollars. Or is it Swiss francs? Illegitimate hierarchies are dyed into the wool of the state, and the notion of ‘civic duty’ is nothing but that wool being pulled over our eyes.

Emma Goldman is usually credited with saying: ‘If voting changed anything they’d make it illegal.’ We can paraphrase: if voting were compulsory, its futility would be guaranteed. Forcing the young and the poor to vote may temporarily amplify their voices, but that would only cause politicians to listen more intently to the one per cent.

Sure, people can spoil their ballots. But isn’t it odd to force them to vote just so they get that opportunity? Millions stay away from the polling booths – that is evidence enough. Let’s find a better story to tell, maybe one about a decentralized society without borders, classes or armies?

Now that’s an option you’ll never get on election day. ■

What do YOU think?

Tell us on: newint.org/argument/latest

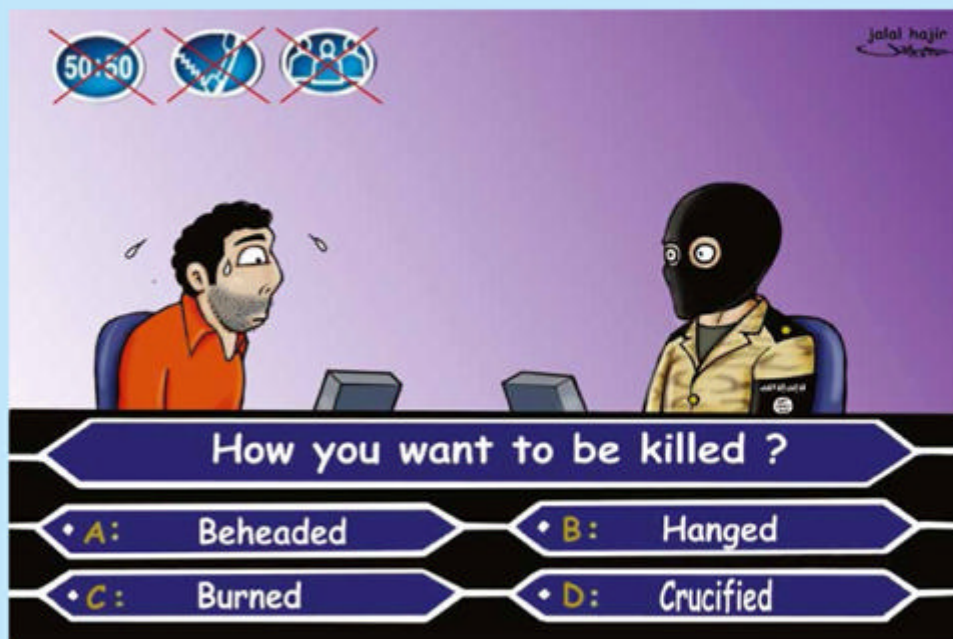
OPEN WINDOW

Each month we showcase the work of a different cartoonist – in collaboration with cartoonmovement.com

THIS MONTH

Jalal Hajir from Morocco with ‘Creative Killing’.

Jalal Hajir is a 35-year-old cartoonist from Casablanca in Morocco. He publishes cartoons and comics in various Moroccan newspapers as well as for a children’s magazine. He has only just joined Cartoon Movement and hopes to make international links as a result. His supporting line to this cartoon was: ‘Creative ways of killing, all recorded on camera and broadcast to an eager international audience.’





Is there a pathway to ending corporate rule in America?

More than a decade ago, former Senator Russ Feingold described US politics as a system of ‘legalized extortion and legalized bribery’. Running for federal office is so expensive that politicians invariably grow beholden to the millionaires and corporate interests that so kindly fill their campaign coffers.

Feingold’s assessment came before the Supreme Court’s Citizens United ruling in 2010, which enshrined spending limitless sums of money as a form of free speech. That decision struck down a century of precedents that enabled the government to impose restrictions, albeit modest ones, on the wanton buying of elections.

Most recently, fossil-fuel magnates Charles and David Koch – the brotherly duo struggling to paint the world’s climate scientists as a cadre of progress-hating conspirators – announced that they will lead a group of arch-conservative donors in spending \$889 million on the 2016 election cycle.

All this gets depressing. One might ask: can we even envision a path toward ending the corporate rule over American democracy?

To answer this, I spoke with a friend, Kai Newkirk, who is a leader in 99 Rise, a grassroots organization devoted to using nonviolent direct action to end the corruption of big money in politics.

On 26 February 2014, as the Supreme Court was set to issue a ruling to extend Citizens United, Newkirk interrupted the proceedings, stating: ‘I rise on behalf of the vast majority of the American people, who believe that money is not speech, corporations are not people, and our democracy should not be for sale to the highest bidder.’

Only by keeping his statement succinct could he finish before being

roughly dragged away by a burly court police officer.

News cameras are prohibited inside the Supreme Court. However, the protest was surreptitiously filmed, and the rare footage became a social media sensation.



This January, on the fifth anniversary of Citizens United, seven other 99 Rise members stood in succession to voice their dissent to the Court. Each of them was tackled and removed as they asserted the principle of ‘one person, one vote’.

Outside of these actions, 99 Rise has worked to build chapters across the US. In California, its members completed a 770-kilometre march from Los Angeles to Sacramento, ending with a 12-day occupation on the state capitol grounds. That mobilization helped to propel the passage of two campaign finance bills. One called for a convention of states to propose a Constitutional Amendment overturning Citizens United.

Changing the US Constitution to restore the integrity of our elections has clear symbolic resonance. But it’s hellishly difficult to accomplish.

Newkirk stressed that there are important victories that can build toward this goal. Disclosure laws would address the problem of ‘dark money’ by requiring that donor organizations publicly identify the corporations and wealthy individuals who fund them. ‘Dark money is like money laundering in the political system,’ Newkirk explains. ‘Ending that is significant because a lot of corporations are worried about brand image and don’t want to do major political spending openly.’

Another step would be securing public financing for elections. A ‘democracy voucher’ system would give a tax credit to every voter so that they could direct a small amount – perhaps \$50 or \$100 – to the candidates of their choosing. While this would not eliminate the disproportionate influence of the wealthy, it would lessen it by bringing more small contributions into play.

More important than these specific measures, Newkirk argues, is the willingness of Americans to convert their

passive dissatisfaction into active revolt.

‘What gives me hope is that I believe in the capacity of popular movements to open up possibilities where they didn’t exist before,’ he says. ‘Our movement is just coming to a place where we’re using more creative and dynamic civil resistance. If that takes off, I think the calculations of Washington insiders about the possibilities of change can be upset quickly.’ ■

Mark Engler, a senior analyst with Foreign Policy In Focus, is currently writing a book about the evolution of political nonviolence. He can be reached via the website DemocracyUprising.com

The Dark Horse (99 minutes)

directed and written by **James Napier Robertson**

Intense, involving, often uneasy – probably not what you’d expect of a film based around a chess club. But its coach and mentor, the wonderfully named Genesis Potini, a Maori chess champion who died in 2011, was an unconventional, generous, troubled soul, who was diagnosed in youth as bipolar. Cliff Curtis, who you may recognize from *Whale Rider* and *Once Were Warriors*, brilliantly portrays his charged, precarious mental state, so that a conventional ‘street kids come good’ story is anything but predictable.

Genesis is passionate, with a capacity for exaltation and for spooking people. The film opens on him walking triumphantly up the middle of a busy road in an imagined

rainstorm. The scene ends with him resisting two cops trying to bundle him into their van.

He’s released from a mental ward into the care of his brother – a middle-aged heavy drinking biker and thief who’s inducting his son into the same life. Genesis offers his nephew (and children at an after-school club) another focus – chess, which he relates to Maori culture and myth, and inspires them to take part in the New Zealand/Aotearoa national junior championships.

The task is not straightforward and Curtis communicates superbly Genesis’s enthrallment and sadness – and courage in handling conventional expectations, prejudice and conflict. Always convincing, often touching – this is a superb film.

★★★★ ML



Passionate and courageous chess champ Genesis Potini is *The Dark Horse*.

Blind (92 minutes)

directed and written by **Eskil Vogt**

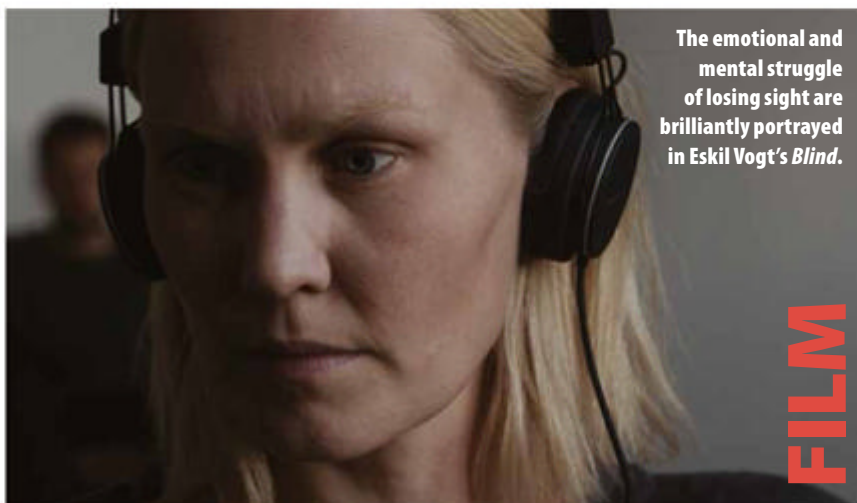
This is a sure, sensual, cleverly conceived portrait of a woman’s mental and emotional struggle and uncertainty following the onset of blindness. Never showy nor melodramatic, it brilliantly explores her psyche by dramatizing what’s happening in her head as she sits alone, day after day in her apartment. Is Ingrid there alone? Does she imagine that her husband sometimes silently comes back to watch her, or does he really do that? What’s happening isn’t at first clear to us as spectators. Who is the guy watching porn online? Is he watching her from a nearby flat?

Ingrid bangs her shins, struggles with cooking, uses an electronic decoder to tell her the colour of the clothes she might wear. She’s forgetting what she looks like, imagines she’s a mess, asks her husband in bed if he’s looking at her, smiling at her touch. She’s gloomy, grieving, jealous, distrusting, reclusive, but she has a sense

of humour, finds solace in music, tries to keep a grip on the wider world by imagining in detail places and people she knows. And she starts to write.

Blind does demand your full attention, but its arresting storytelling pays off in insight and rapport.

★★★★★ ML



The emotional and mental struggle of losing sight are brilliantly portrayed in Eskil Vogt’s *Blind*.

FILM

The Reason Why Vol 2

by **Goran Kajfeš' Subtropic Arkestra**

(Headspin Recordings, HEAD 021 CD/LP/download)

Hot on the heels of its much-lauded predecessor comes **The Reason Why Vol 2**, from Swedish trumpeter Goran Kajfeš and a tight band of heavy woodwind and loud electric guitars.

Kajfeš, whose parents immigrated to Stockholm from Croatia, is a classically trained jazz musician and the disciplined playfulness of this background is manifest here in glorious fashion. In fact, this album is so playful in its sonic swerves that the listener can be wrong-eared as Kajfeš makes a point of collapsing numerous sonic worlds and genres in on themselves.

The name of the band – Subtropic Arkestra – suggests as much in its homage to the cosmic jazz of Sun Ra and to the *mélange* that makes up Brazilian *tropicália*. So, there are hints of Ennio Morricone on the ultra-smooth brass, flute and organ lines of 'Adimiz Miskindir Bizim' while the dub-heavy beats of the 'Dokuz Seki/Esmerim' make you wonder if a piece of 1970s Turkish kitsch hasn't been fed through a reggae studio. All this is intentional. The latter is an instrumental that slams together two separate pieces: one by contemporary Turkish jazz drummer Okay Temiz and the other an overwrought song from the 1970s Turkish group Beyaz Kelebekler. **Vol 2's** instrumentals may use the raw material of other musicians – they form 'the reason why' – but its results are inimitably its own.

★★★★ LG

gorankajfes.com

THE REASON WHY VOL. 2

Goran Kajfeš
Subtropic Arkestra



Goran Kajfeš
– inimitably
himself.

MUSIC

Loking towards
new horizons –
Bassekou Kouyaté
on **Ba Power**.

Ba Power

by **Bassekou Kouyaté & Ngoni Ba** (Glitterbeat Records, 023 CD/LP/download)

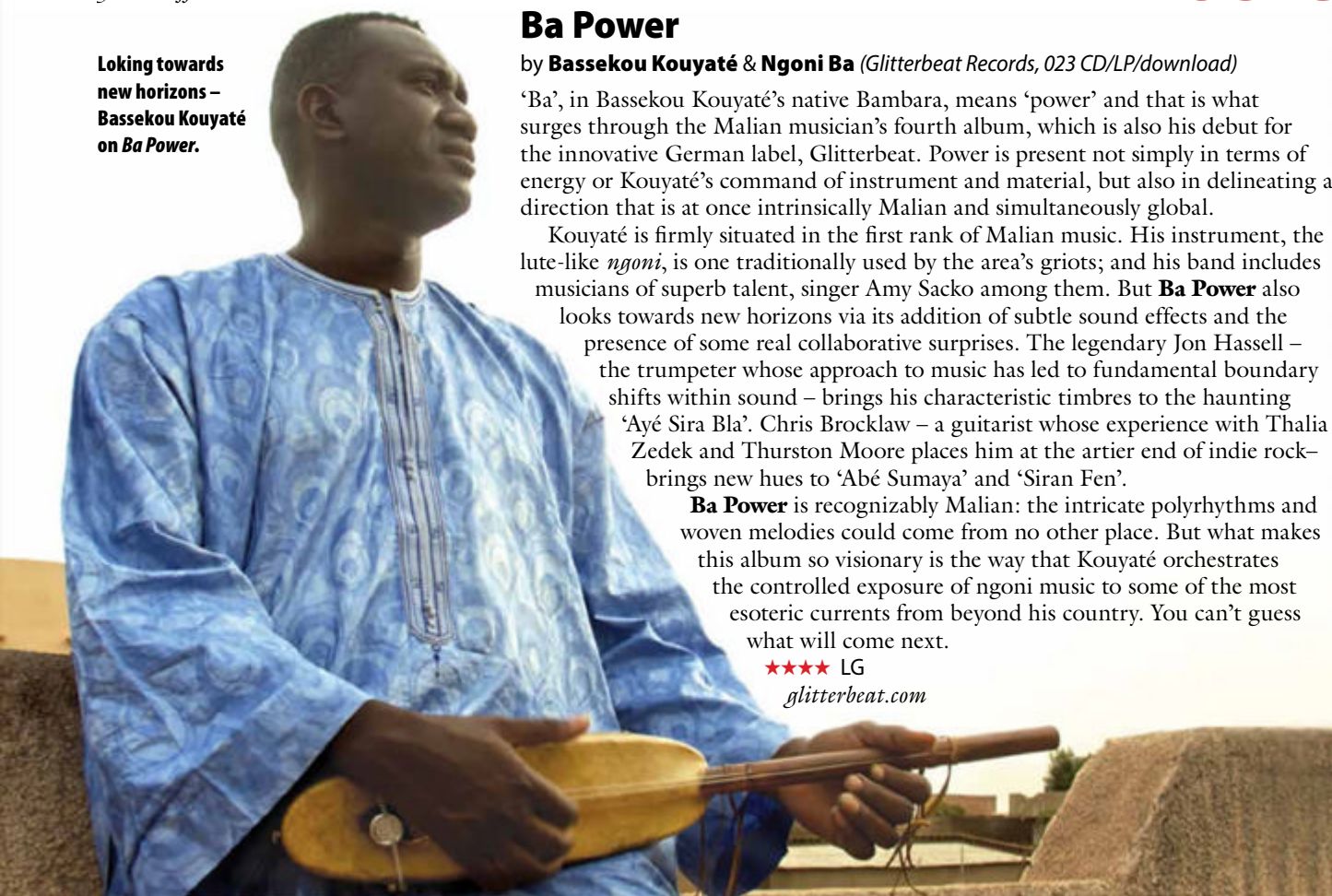
'Ba', in Bassekou Kouyaté's native Bambara, means 'power' and that is what surges through the Malian musician's fourth album, which is also his debut for the innovative German label, Glitterbeat. Power is present not simply in terms of energy or Kouyaté's command of instrument and material, but also in delineating a direction that is at once intrinsically Malian and simultaneously global.

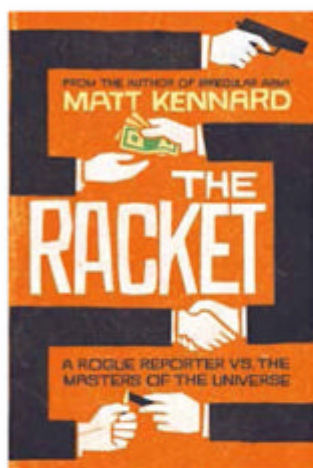
Kouyaté is firmly situated in the first rank of Malian music. His instrument, the lute-like *ngoni*, is one traditionally used by the area's griots; and his band includes musicians of superb talent, singer Amy Sacko among them. But **Ba Power** also looks towards new horizons via its addition of subtle sound effects and the presence of some real collaborative surprises. The legendary Jon Hassell – the trumpeter whose approach to music has led to fundamental boundary shifts within sound – brings his characteristic timbres to the haunting 'Ayé Sira Bla'. Chris Brocklaw – a guitarist whose experience with Thalia Zedek and Thurston Moore places him at the artier end of indie rock – brings new hues to 'Abé Sumaya' and 'Siran Fen'.

Ba Power is recognizably Malian: the intricate polyrhythms and woven melodies could come from no other place. But what makes this album so visionary is the way that Kouyaté orchestrates the controlled exposure of *ngoni* music to some of the most esoteric currents from beyond his country. You can't guess what will come next.

★★★★ LG

glitterbeat.com





The Racket

by **Matt Kennard** (Zed Books, ISBN 9781780329888)

This timely and readable book is a distillation of Matt Kennard's investigative reports, over four years, as a journalist for the *Financial Times*. The Racket of the title is the global scam that the military, political and financial elite – the 1% – have inflicted on the rest of us. Beginning with an overview of the emergence of the US hegemony in the post-War world, Kennard ranges widely in his attempt to show the scope and depth of the Racket. From the 'disaster capitalism' imposed on a hurricane-traumatized Haiti to the undermining of democracy in Bolivia, Kennard lays bare the mechanics of the scam. As he rightly says – and as the people of Greece know – 'In a world based on the exchange of goods and

services, the most effective way of controlling people – or nations – is to put them in your debt.' Through military might (coup, invasion, subversion) or soft power (the IMF, World Bank, 'structural adjustment', privatization, austerity) the fix is in. Importantly, Kennard devotes space to the global fightback against the Racket – the Occupy movement, the Arab Spring, Latin American solidarity. He compellingly makes the case that we are at a crucial stage in the battle between 'a global population that wants a democracy that prioritizes the people, not big business and not capital; and a ruling class that wants it the other way round'. This book is a valuable tool for anyone wishing to engage in this worldwide struggle for justice.

★★★★ PW
zedbooks.co.uk

BOOKS The Four Books

by **Yan Lianke**, translated from the Chinese by Carlos Rojas (Chatto & Windus, ISBN 9780701186975)

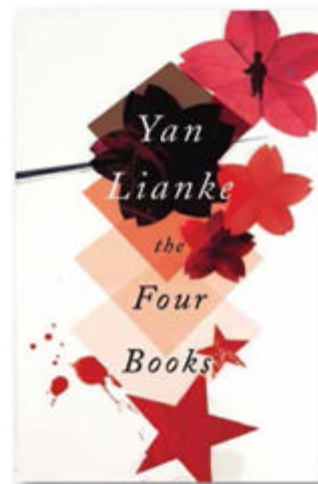
This sprawling, ambitious novel takes place in a labour camp in the late 1950s, during China's Great Leap Forward, a massive drive to industrialize the country which had calamitous consequences and resulted in a famine in which millions died. The camp inmates, known only by their former professions – The Author, The Musician, The Scholar, and so on – are undergoing 're-education' through hard labour. They struggle to meet ever-increasing productivity quotas: for huge crops of wheat, impossible quantities of steel. Their Sisyphean tasks are set by a capricious overseer known only as The Child, who monitors their every move and dispenses punishments and rewards based on whim. As

the famine bites, the inmates are increasingly left to their own resources as the regime's iron control disintegrates.

The novel is structured as four narratives, echoing the gospels and the four Confucian texts. Two of the strands are fragmentary – one giving an eclectic overview of compound life and the other being a philosophical manuscript encompassing myth and legend. The remaining narratives are both written by The Author: one, a report on the activities of his fellows, written for the authorities; and the other a clandestine novel, based on events in the camp.

Some effort is required from the reader to overcome the distancing effect of the book's structure and the nebulous characterization. Perseverance is rewarded, however, with a rich reading experience and much light shed on this catastrophic period of Chinese history.

★★★★ PW
randomhouse.co.uk



The Spice Box Letters

by **Eve Makis**
(Sandstone Press, ISBN 978-1-910124-08-6)

April 2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, the *Medz Yeghern* (Great Crime) when the Ottoman Empire banished its Armenian minority population, resulting in the death of at least a million people. With so many World War One centennial commemorations happening across Europe, a novel that draws attention to another important, yet lesser known, tragedy is to be welcomed.

Alas, **The Spice Box Letters** falls short on several counts. The plot is contrived and often predictable (including that favourite device of a torn photo whose two halves are reunited many years later); there is not enough historical context, which could confuse the general

reader; the characters are either unconvincing or uninviting (although the curmudgeonly old patriarch, Gabriel, won me over in the end); and the love interest between Katerina, uncovering her Armenian family's roots on a visit to Cyprus in 1985, and Ara, an Armenian-Cypriot who translates her grandmother's diaries for her, is a rather unfortunate distraction that jars uncomfortably with the descriptions of the horrific events of 1915-18.

Author Eve Makis is a part-time tutor in creative writing, and **The Spice Box Letters** has all those elements that might appear on a beginner's guide for students. Unfortunately, this novel is proof that compelling writing depends on more than mixing together an approved list of ingredients.

★★ JL
sandstonepress.com



The Adventure of the Busts of Eva Perón

by **Carlos Gamerro**, translated from the Spanish by Ian Barnett (& *Other Stories*, ISBN 9781908276506)

Carlos Gamerro's splendid, high-octane novel is set in Buenos Aires in 1975. Argentina is fast descending into the period that became known as the Dirty War, a time of military dictatorship, death squads and guerrilla warfare. As the book opens, we learn that business leader Fausto Tamerlán has been kidnapped by the radical Perónist guerrilla group, the Montoneros. Part of the ransom demand stipulates that the company places a bust of Eva Perón in each of its 92 offices. Our hapless hero Ernesto Marroné, Tamerlán's head of procurement, is charged with carrying out this task.

Unfortunately, just as he is visiting the plasterworks to source the busts, the factory is occupied by its workers, who stage a sit-in. Desperate to secure the order, Marroné is plunged headlong into a journey that takes him into the heart of the Buenos Aires

slums. Armed only with nostrums from his business gurus such as Dale Carnegie, Marroné is singularly ill-equipped to deal with the world of poverty and violence in which he finds himself. The climax of the book takes place in a truly bizarre Eva Perón-themed brothel as the clock ticks down on the ransom deadline.

The Adventure of the Busts of Eva Perón could have been an incoherent mess of a book but somehow it works. Combining elements of Ealing Comedy with touches of early Louis de Bernières, it views radical politics through the unlikely lens of rumbustious and scatological slapstick and gloriously, absurdly, it succeeds in being both raucously funny and soberingly thoughtful.

★★★★★ PW
andotherstories.org

Also out there...

MUSIC Nearly 20 years after the global success of the **Buena Vista Social Club** album and its various solo spin-offs comes *Lost and Found* (World Circuit). The outpouring of songs by the veteran Cuban stars in those initial Nick Gold sessions was such that many tracks remained unreleased until this lovely and lively compilation, featuring Ibrahim Ferrer, Omara Portuondo, Compay Segundo and all the big favourites.

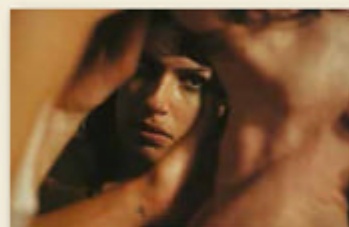
Fade in Time (Nest Collective Records) is a numinous collection of British folk songs from **Sam Lee** and friends who bring *koto*, violin and trumpet to the endeavour. Not only are the settings unusual, but Lee also incorporates the voices of some of the song-givers, those elderly singers who held these riches in their repertoire. It is an appropriate gesture.



Xavier Dolan's **Mommy** is a remarkable, emotionally intense tale of the undaunted love and commitment of a single mother, who is definitely no pushover, battling with her wilful 15-year-old son who has ADHD. Great performances and soundtrack – and surprisingly upbeat.

BOOKS With Britain's general election imminent and the Green Party seeing an unprecedented rise in its membership, Caroline Lucas' **Honourable Friends?** (*Portobello Books*) is nothing if not timely. Lucas, the country's only Green MP, is described as 'an outsider at the heart of parliament'. The respected activist uses this book to tell us what is wrong with politics – and what we can do about it. Thoughtful and straight-talking; anecdotal and highly readable.

The Story of Hurry (*Seven Stories*) is an affecting and highly unusual children's book, based on the true story of a young zookeeper called Moody who helps to transform a donkey into a zebra by painting stripes on him to delight local children living amid the horrors of war in Gaza. Author Emma Williams is a medical doctor who has worked in war zones, including the West Bank; the mixed-



FILM Desiree Akhavan, the writer and director of **Appropriate Behaviour**, also takes the main role of Shirin, an Iranian-American who never quite carries off her roles as perfect marriageable daughter, trendy bisexual New Yorker,

or tutor to a filmmaking class for five-year-olds. An amusing, low-key, wry comedy about hip types, but touching too about her family.

Suite Française neatly distils the second part of Irène Némirovsky's novel about the impact of the early months of the German army's occupation of a small French agricultural town. It's unusually clear-sighted about everyday social attitudes, divisions and opportunism, though the clean BBC-ish design is disappointing.



media illustrations are by accomplished artist Ibrahim Quraishi. This heart-warming tale of triumph of spirit and imagination does not flinch from reality and is suitable for human beings of all ages. A historical, contextual note at the back is especially helpful.

REVIEWS EDITOR: **Vanessa Baird** email: vanessab@newint.org

Reviewers: Phil England, Louise Gray, Jo Lateu, Malcolm Lewis, JP O'Malley, Peter Whittaker.

STAR RATING

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR

PHIL CHAMBERLAIN explains how the existence of an employment blacklist operated by some of Britain's biggest construction companies came to light – and how it eventually revealed the involvement of the police and security services as well as the extent of the problem internationally.

Beating the blacklist

The files were held in an office sheltering behind an anonymous green door in a small town in England.

There were just over 3,200 of them and each gave, to varying degrees, a little history about a person. It had their National Insurance number, a home address, their occupation and information on what they did. That might include letters they had written to newspapers or gossip about their political activities.

None of the 3,213 people knew about these files. But what they did know was that on many occasions jobs they had applied for had been mysteriously withdrawn at the last moment. What many of them came to realize was that, when they started raising concerns about health and safety or took on roles in their trade union, the work suddenly dried up.

Until the investigators knocked on the green door in the spring of 2009, this operation was the UK construction industry's dirty secret. Over 16 years, more than 40 of the country's biggest firms had financed this blacklisting operation. These included Skanska, McAlpine's Laing O'Rourke, Carillion, Balfour Beatty; big names, transnational companies, connected corporations.

Blacklisting wasn't a new phenomenon. The Economic League, an organization set up in the aftermath of the First World War to combat communism, had boasted of its prowess in keeping an eye on 'subversives'. The League kept files on tens of thousands of people in many different sectors. It scoured the press for names, infiltrated union meetings and took details from subscribing companies. It also had regular contact with Britain's political police – Special Branch.

Even the most august institutions had their blacklisting procedures. For 50 years, until the mid-1980s, the BBC had a Special Duties Manager in Room 105 at its headquarters. That person was there to vet staff appointments and ensure no-one secretly in the pay of Russia was allowed to advance. Anyone deemed politically unstable had a Christmas tree stamped on their file.

In the end, the League folded through a mixture of incompetence and exposure by journalists and MPs. When the League collapsed, however, one of its departments, the Services Group, was extracted, along with its files, by construction companies that had used it and set up as a new operation blandly called The Consulting Association.

Their trusted lieutenant was a man called Ian Kerr. He had joined the League in 1969, having originally trained as

a teacher but been attracted by the better pay. Kerr appears to have been a natural for the job: methodical, discreet and capable. The files from the League were added to and expanded. It wasn't just construction workers. Academics, politicians, journalists and environmental activists all had files opened on them. Some construction companies had links with Special Branch and fed information from undercover police officers into the files. Conversations with some senior union officials were relayed and added in.

The sources were hidden behind code numbers but the meaning was clear. Among the phrases people found on their files were: 'Do not touch' and 'Do not employ'.

Dave Smith, an engineer from Essex, was one of those with a file compiled by Kerr. He says: 'The mid-1990s saw the start of an unprecedented building boom. I was a qualified engineer with over a decade of experience and had even started working in junior management roles. It was at this time that I also became more active in the union and started raising concerns about asbestos and overflowing toilets on building sites. In 1998 I was driving a big 4x4. By 2000, I couldn't get

a job as an engineer anywhere. Even employment agencies stopped phoning me. When, in desperation, I rang to ask why, one agency honestly told me that I came up as "code 99" on their computer system, which meant that they had been told never to offer me work ever again.'

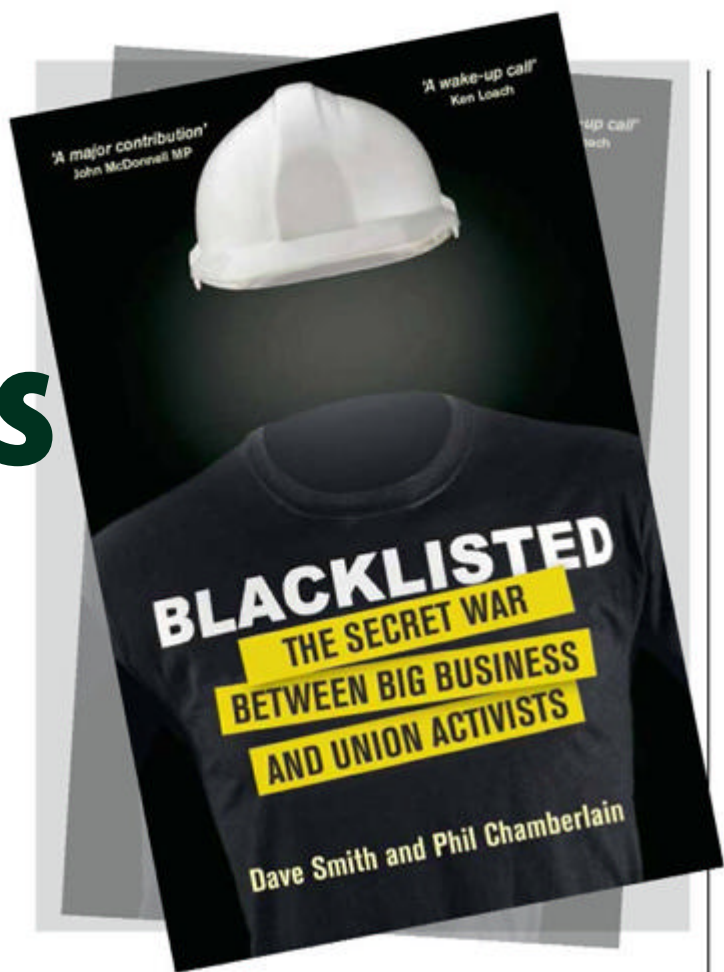
The illusion of criminality

When hauled before a Parliamentary inquiry the construction companies said that the operation was intended to prevent crime such as thefts from taking place on sites. It was a very familiar defence.

In the 1930s, the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee investigated how US companies dealt with trade unions. The head of the notorious Pinkerton detective agency was questioned about the reasons for spying on union meetings. He said it was to get: 'Information dealing with sabotage, theft of material, and other irregularities.' The actual reports produced by the agency gave no evidence of sabotage or theft but plenty of information on how unions were organizing. The head of one company that employed Pinkerton blustered: 'It might lead to sabotage if those people were the kind that I think they may be – Communists.'

Fast forward 70 years and company director Cullum McAlpine was asked by MPs to explain how what he described

Among the phrases people found on their files were: 'Do not touch' and 'Do not employ'



as the Association's 'reference service' would work.

'I was led to believe that the member companies would provide information to The Consulting Association on individuals who had acted in a disruptive way on building sites, had broken some of the working-rule agreements, had sabotaged such things, or had committed criminal acts such as theft, vandalism or threatening behaviour – that sort of stuff.'

On a corporate web page called *Mythbuster and FAQs*, construction firm Carillion says that Crown House, a subsidiary which subscribed to The Consulting Association, was concerned about 'suspected or actually reported sabotage, threatening behaviour and intimidation' and that meetings would be about things like preventing theft.

Yet an analysis of the files shows that only a tiny handful mention theft – the main criterion for inclusion was, as with Dave Smith, lawful union activity. The effect was to force people to change careers, move abroad, split from their partners and, in some cases, there were suicides.

The Consulting Association was busted when government investigators charged with protecting people's personal data begin to look into blacklisting. As a result a multimillion-pound court action is currently in progress and a full public inquiry may yet be held.

An international problem

As campaigners and journalists began unravelling the secret operation, so links were made with similar operations around the world.

In Indonesia, for example, 25-year-old Siti Yuliana had worked for PDK, which made footballs on behalf of sports firm Adidas. The Indonesian company brought in new terms and conditions and hundreds of people were

made redundant. Yuliana said that, after she took part in protests, PDK circulated her name, along with others, to manufacturing companies. She failed to get another job for a long time and it led to her family being evicted because they could not pay the rent.

On the US Gulf Coast, employment conditions for guest workers are notoriously poor. Olivia Guzman works in the seafood industry and joined the National Guestworker Alliance (NGA). She said: 'As a member of the NGA, I met many other workers like me and began to organize. I spoke up in meetings, visited worksites, and brought grievances about the labour camp to my boss. For that I was blacklisted this season. I knew about this risk, but I knew that if I didn't speak up, the abuse would keep getting worse.'

Victor Robles is one of thousands of Mexican workers who travel abroad each season to service the agricultural industries of Canada and the US. Like many others, he is on the Mexican government's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme. One January, with a plane ticket already bought, Victor was suddenly told there was a problem with his visa and he couldn't travel to Canada. When Victor called in at the programme offices, an employee told him his file showed the actual reason for this was that he had been involved in union activities.

It turned out that the Mexican consular officials in Canada had been spying on seasonal workers there and reporting names of activists back home. A blacklist had been compiled to stop them from getting visas.

Meanwhile, in France, a statement issued by IKEA explained that the reason it had sacked four senior executives was because of 'practices against values and ethical standards'. Those practices were secretly accessing police files to spy on customers and employees. According to leaked emails, IKEA France had employed a private security company to check a police database containing the details on millions of people. Among those it wanted checked were union members.

Irish-based employment agency Atlanco Rimec, which specializes in placing workers from Eastern Europe in jobs across the continent, has also been accused of maintaining a blacklist – a charge it denies.

The practice of blacklisting is an international problem. Nevertheless, the blacklisting of workers in the UK is a particularly squalid example and it has taken years of research and campaigning to bring it into the spotlight. Yet while Ian Kerr of The Consulting Association was fined £5,000 (\$8,000) for breaching data protection rules, no-one else has been held to account. Many of those involved have even been promoted.

One of those on the British blacklist, comedian and activist Mark Thomas, said: 'The tragedy of this is we were lucky to get this. The tragedy is we have grabbed a snippet of this.'

Stan Hardy, former director general of the Economic League, told MPs: 'The Consulting Association lasted for the best part of 20 years as a stand-alone but way-below-the-parapet operation. It was not recorded and was not registered as a company . . . does that not beg the question that there may be more than one somewhere?' ■

Phil Chamberlain is co-author, with **Dave Smith**, of the new book *Blacklisted*, published by New Internationalist. Buy the book or ebook from our UK shop at £6.66 (RRP £9.99). Use promotion code BL33 when you order at: shop.newint.org/uk



Growing upside down

Meet Juan. Just 10 years old, he works night and day to help feed his family. And, as FERNANDO DEL BERRO explains, his reality – so removed from our own – is shared by millions of children in Peru and beyond.

All photos: Fernando Del Berro

Imagine the world upside down. Imagine tomorrow, 8am. You're getting your son or daughter ready for school. All of a sudden you notice that your child is not carrying a backpack but a lead pickaxe and shovel. Not a play one for the beach: a real, heavy one that will blister up their fingers.

And when you're about to help them cross the road you see the track-lines on their hands from hours of working in the sun. You can't believe it when you hear 'I'm going to work' come out of your child's mouth, with that authoritative tone 10-year-olds have.

This is the other side of the looking glass. To Juan Huachaca, a 10-year-old Peruvian boy who works making bricks in Huachipa, a town on the outskirts of Lima, there's nothing strange about it. Nor to the 168 million other boys and girls around the world who go to work every morning, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

I'm at the *pampas* where Juan makes bricks – shiny plains as flat as an open hand where, suddenly, a deep wound hollows out the land and turns it into a huge brick plain.

'This is where I live; this is where I work,' Juan tells me in a tired voice while he incessantly kneads together clay and water with his bare feet.

In Peru, working is normal for 1.8 million boys and girls aged 5 to 17. It has the second-highest child-labour rate in Latin America

He lives with his family in an adobe tin-plate house, with mats for flooring and just one bed to share, warmed by a tiny kerosene heater. Cheerful melodies in the background are at times able to lift the sordid sadness of poverty.

Every morning, Juan works with his parents and siblings inside those huge wounds in the ground. In Huachipa, when this place was right-side up, Juan's ancestors worked the land with their crops. They sowed corn, potatoes and cotton. The Huaycoloro River ran through here. Now, it's a wasteland; the only thing growing is the mud that will become the bricks that daily eat the plain's skin right off.

Juan gets up at 3am and starts work at 4, and the air comes cold as steel. It is time for him and his dad to prepare the clay with soil stolen from the plain and water sucked out of a well; something they have to do at night so the blaze of the day doesn't dry out the mixture.

Later, Juan will work for hours in silence,

hauling mud – a repetitive, mechanical task. Between grunts he will put the wet substance in the *gavera*, a mould for four bricks. He will pick up a stick and shave off the extra clay. Then he will tip the 13-kilogram mould onto the ground. After that, it is the sun's turn to work, drying out the thousands of bricks laid on the *pampas*.

Growing bricks not corn

In Peru, working is normal for 1.8 million boys and girls aged 5 to 17 (23 per cent of the total Peruvian population under 18). It has the second-highest child-labour rate in Latin America, after Brazil. The reasons are all to do with structural poverty: they work because their wage is another half-litre of milk for today or another kilogram of rice for the week.

Hundreds of immigrants from the country's interior have arrived, leaving behind the last days of traditional agriculture. The globalization of the economy has meant that many farmers can't sell their crops at local markets any more. After the US-Peru free



trade agreement came into effect in 2009, dirt-cheap, subsidized products from huge US agribusinesses unbalanced the playing field.

Juan's family keeps 'working the land' but now 'grows' bricks, not corn. At 10, Juan already knows that his work is a major contributor to making ends meet. But he complains: 'My hands are always cracked. I don't like anyone seeing them because they're all calloused,' he whispers, showing me the insides of his hands.

When the clock strikes eight, Juan has already been working for hours. It is time for school, although he doesn't always go. And when he does, he only goes until noon since, after a too-light snack, he must go back to the bricks from 2 to 5pm.

In Huachipa, one NGO – the Life Defense

Ten-year-old Juan spends his days making bricks. 'This is where I live; this is where I work,' he says.

Association (ADEVI) – has convinced some families to change; every year 100 children stop working and start going to school regularly. Other NGOs accept child labour if it doesn't affect the minors' development. MANTHOC, a Peruvian organization representing more than 2,500 working children, states that 'work is bad when it is carried out in conditions of exploitation, with abuse, and violating our dignity as human beings'. But it doesn't believe it makes sense to forbid children from working when the socio-economic system has jettisoned them into poverty, forcing them to work to subsist.

An adult in a child's body

Working the bricks is a job that values children's lightness and agility. And hiring a child is 'advantageous' for businesses: they will

stop going to school. So when they are older they can only work at precarious jobs. And then the situation happens again, because their children will also start working when they are little.

Now imagine Juan wrapped in a blanket on the couch in the living room. Your living room, not his. Juan's house doesn't have a living room, much less a couch. Imagine him in muddy puddles. But this time not preparing the clay, but jumping in and out, splashing. Imagine him in your neighbourhood, running and dancing in the wind. Not to taste the



be paid less than an adult; they don't usually know their rights; they are more docile; and they join unions very infrequently. Children, it would seem, are clay that can be moulded to employers' pleasure.

The 'advantages' for the kids are less apparent: bone deformities, musculoskeletal problems, blistered hands, foot injuries. Alfredo Robles, ADEVI's director, says that these children are usually 'much shorter than others in their age group. They also tend to be withdrawn since they're forced into responsibilities as they grow up.'

For these families, economic hardship becomes a vicious circle that repeats with every generation, since work means minors have to

dryness of the bricks, but to enjoy from start to finish those days where sadness has no place.

A child from Huachipa, plonked down in your own living room, seen from this side of the world, seems like a kid upside down. And, believe me, Juan is. At his age, his hands are already streaked with time. He is flying a clumsy kite that can't get off the ground because the wind is fickle. Juan is an adult in a child's body. He's a kid from the other side. ■

Juan and his younger brother (peeping out from behind the bricks) occasionally snatch moments of play, but their work is never done.

Fernando Del Berro is a freelance journalist and photographer based in Madrid. fernandodelberro@gmail.com



Cosying up to the Saudis

If you live in a country – and chances are that you

do – your head of state no doubt recently paid a cringe-worthy tribute to King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, aka the psychopath's psychopath, who died in January.

From 1,000 lashes for running a secular blog to executions for witchcraft, the country is a veritable buffet of barbarity. And wherever there's cruelty in the Middle East, you can safely bet that my country, Britain, helped fund it: Saudi Arabia is, almost inevitably, Britain's biggest market for arms, buying \$2.4 billion worth in 2013 alone.

Our government has a charmingly cosy relationship with the Saudis – no doubt because historically, we were very much the pioneers of tyranny. I expect Britain treats Saudi Arabia in the same way that a retired fallen-from-grace footballer encourages his grandson to carry on his dream. When we sell them arms, we want to live vicariously through them. We may not have an empire any more, but there's no reason why that should stop us from carrying on our legacy of desecrating the human race.

Of course, activists have long called for our government to end this ludicrous friendship. Why not speak out against the public executions, against the lashes, against the human rights abuse? Well, we activists are in luck, because finally, FINALLY, our government is doing something about Saudi Arabia's backward, medieval, wicked and merciless justice system. And by 'something', I do, of course, mean 'making a profit from it'.

A commercial arm of our Ministry of Justice has put in a \$9-million bid which will, the government says, 'conduct a training needs analysis across all the learning and development programmes within the Saudi Arabian Prison Service'.

Presumably this training will include health-and-safety sessions such as 'Don't Punish Yourself: How to avoid repetitive strain injury while administering 1,000 lashes'. Or moral training such as 'Women Drivers: Kill them or torture them? Hear both sides of the debate'.

The naive among us may hope that Britain's involvement will improve the lot of the imprisoned. But we can only guess: Britain won't yet reveal its plans, as they are 'commercially sensitive'. Which is entirely fair. After all, the last thing we want is one of our business rivals undercutting us on beheadings. Ha ha, undercutting! Get it? It's a fun joke, to take your mind off the fact that Saudi Arabia executes people.

Britain would probably argue that its foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia is a good strategy. Better to have them on our side so we can influence them, they'll say. Well, selling them more arms than we sold any other country in 2013 is certainly one way of influencing them. It's like helping your alcoholic friend back to sobriety by giving them the keys to the Smirnoff factory.

Adam Coogee from Human Rights Watch says it best: 'Quiet training programmes are not a substitute for active British engagement with the Saudi authorities on human rights abuses in the justice system.' But of course, we're British. We don't want to make a fuss. We'll settle for quiet politeness – coupled, of course, with brutal torture and shameless profit. There really is nothing more British than that. ■

Chris Coltrane is a stand-up comedian and anti-austerity activist. Follow him on Twitter: [chris_coltrane](#). His show 'Activism Is Fun' is a free download at [chriscoltrane.com](#)



Southern Exposure



Nasima Khan (left) with her home servant Sokina.

In Bangladesh, there is no minimum wage for those in domestic service, nor weekly holidays, nor working hours per day. And there is no public discourse around this issue.

I approached urban, middle-class women and told them that I wanted to take their portraits together with their housemaid, seated on the drawing-room sofa. I wanted to break the 'spatial' taboo in urban middle-class homes, which is basically a class taboo. Although the mistress and the



Sabrina Haque (left) with her 18-year-old housemaid Moyna.

housemaid inhabit the same domestic space, their social and economic privileges and their ideological worth are poles apart. I wanted to explore the possibility of creating bonds of intimacy among women who are unequal according to dominant norms – norms which we ourselves internalize.

I like to think that my work will help us reflect on the need to change domestic relationships which are not 'natural' but social and historical. **Jannatul Mawa** mawajannatul.com



Anjumanara (left) with her housemaid Jibonunneesa.



Sharmina Hossain (right) with her 11-year-old house help, Kulsum.

Puzzle Page by Axe

The crossword prize is a voucher for our online shop to the equivalent of \$30. Only the winner will be notified. Send your entries by 23 April to: New Internationalist Puzzle Page, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK; fax to +44 1865 403346; or email a scan to: puzzlepage@newint.org
Winner for Crossword 198: Raymond Nolan, Droylsden, Manchester, England.

Crossword 200

CRYPTIC Across

- 6 Place in Egypt sailor finds where the French drink (7)
- 7 Brazilian city is in the control of Mob elements (5)
- 9 Elected articulate old Brit (4)
- 10 Black habits associated with these Haitian neighbours (10)
- 11 Ring PM about the African situation (8)
- 12 Trickery exposed after last month's tape is reworded (6)
- 14 Equatorial inlet is renamed in becoming a part of France (5-10)
- 17 Bosnian city is found, by the majority with cars, limited (6)
- 18 Heard dog is running wild somewhere in Ireland (8)
- 21 Conveniently situated waterhole position by the western edge of desert (4-6)
- 23 Phone card one picked up around old Bangkok (4)
- 24 Million evacuated from Mediterranean island year before a Crimean resort (5)
- 25 Croon a Gershwin piece about wild donkeys (7)

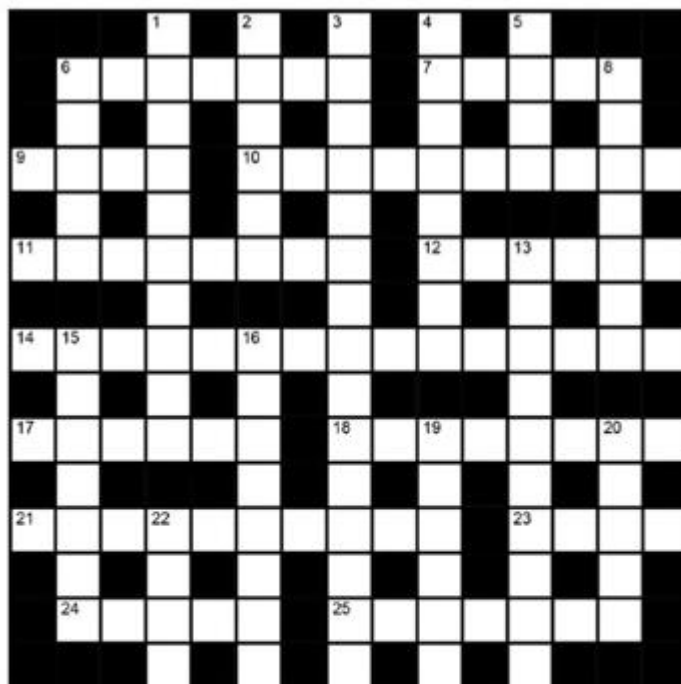
CRYPTIC Down

- 1 A letter comes from St Maarten or a British Caribbean island (10)
- 2 Appropriate bad-weather transport to put child Oscar into accordingly (6)
- 3 One treating people in W Australia to become cooler (9,6)
- 4 Oxford man bumps into a famous singer at a site on the Thames, south of the city (8)
- 5 Alliance to stop king (4)
- 6 US states shortly are to meet in support of a Chilean city (5)
- 8 Oath heard in Normandy from Odin's

- muse, disorientated, having no southerly bearings (3,4)
- 13 Smart English city's about to walk away from 'southern seaside' location (10)
- 15 Tumult in Oregon over the years indicates mountain building (7)
- 16 In the Auvergne a place to see a gold flower making headway with capital from Cantal (8)
- 19 Out-of-date meat found near Manchester (6)
- 20 They come from Borneo and (odd work days) row back out (5)
- 22 French composer, avoiding maybe a tough question being asked, gets a break (4)

QUICK Across

- 6 ----- Bay, site of the Battle of the Nile, 1798 (7)
- 7 Brazilian city at the Amazon's mouth (5)
- 9 One of an ancient British people of obscure origin (4)
- 10 Black Friars (10)
- 11 African country, capital Yaoundé (8)
- 12 Treachery (6)
- 14 Department of France, prefecture Nantes (5-10)
- 17 Mainly Muslim Herzegovinian city famous for its ancient bridge over the Neretva R (6)
- 18 Port of Co Louth, Ireland, close to the site of the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 (8)
- 21 In a good position (4-6)
- 23 Name of an Asian country until 1939 (4)
- 24 WWII conference site for Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill in 1945 (5)
- 25 Asian wild asses: ancient military catapults (7)



QUICK Down

- 1 British overseas territory, capitals Plymouth and Brades (*de facto*) (10)
- 2 Motorized sledge (6)
- 3 Cooling sea breeze off the coast of W Australia (9,6)
- 4 Oxfordshire town, home to Radley College, one of four English boys-only independent senior schools (with Winchester, Eton and Harrow) (8)
- 5 Political or economic confederation (4)
- 6 Seaport of N Chile (5)
- 8 French exhortation to the heavens! (3,4)
- 13 County town of West Sussex, once a thriving port (10)
- 15 Process of mountain building (7)
- 16 Capital of the French department of Cantal (8)

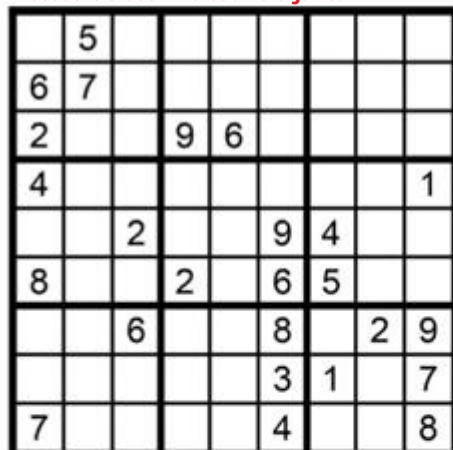
- 19 In Greater Manchester, once the world's single most productive cotton spinning town (6)
- 20 Indigenous, non-Muslim peoples of Borneo (5)
- 22 Soothe (4)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

Across: 1/18/2 From Land's End to John o' Groats, 9 Cordoba, 10 Etruria, 11 Okapi, 12 Ho Chi Minh, 13 Asuncion, 15 Shia, 20 Doldrums, 24 Chastened, 26 Norma, 27 Icecaps, 28 Segovia, 29 Fort Lauderdale.
Down: 1 Factor, 3 Laotians, 4 Neath, 5 Suez Canal, 6 Nordic, 7 Turkish, 8 Baghdad, 14 Indonesia, 16 Ajaccio, 17 Srinagar, 19 Heave to, 21 Moravia, 22 Strait, 23 Harare, 25 Dosed.

Sudoku 46

The Sudoku that thinks it's a word game!



Now, using the key below, substitute letters for the numbers in the north-east block...

1=S; 2=Y; 3=D; 4=A; 5=N; 6=U; 7=B; 8=H; 9=O

...and make as many words as you can of four letters or more from the nine letters in the key words, the extra clue to which is: 'Part of Quebec in a Newman movie, for instance - the interior's "bon" in production' (6,3) You cannot use the same letter more than once, nor use proper nouns (excepting the keyword), slang, offensive words, abbreviations, participles or simple plurals (adding an 's' or 'es').

GOOD 40 words of at least four letters, including 12 words of five letters or more

VERY GOOD 45 words of at least four letters, including 15 words of five letters or more.

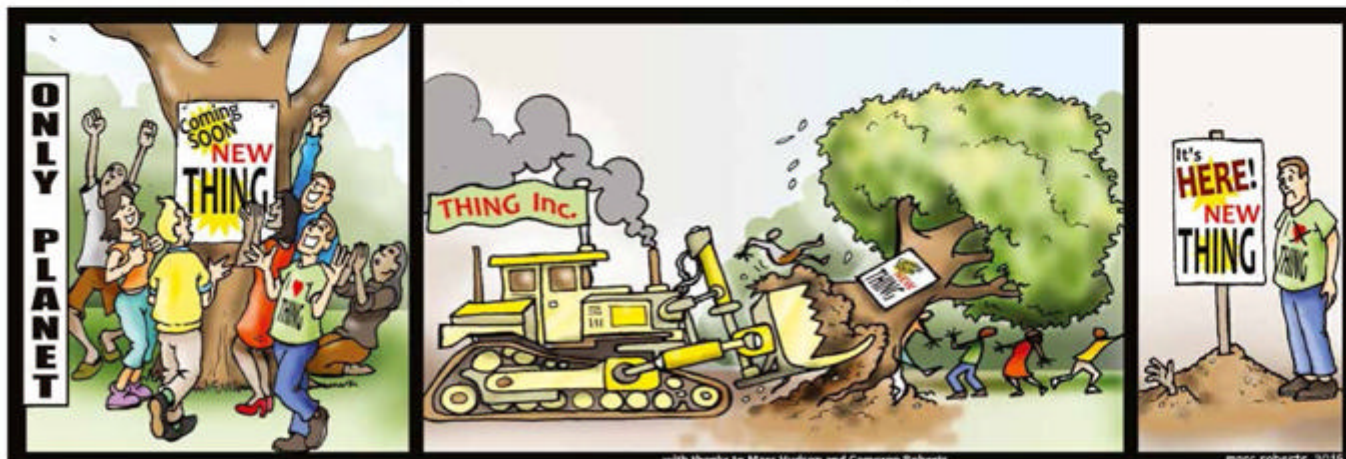
EXCELLENT 50 words of at least four letters, including 20 words of five letters or more.

Last month's **Sudoku keyword**: 'Treblinka'

Solution to Wordsearch 45: The 12 types or systems of government were: Autocracy, Democracy, Despotism, Empire, Junta, Kingdom, Monarchy, Plutocracy, Puppet, Republic, Theocracy, Triumvirate..

Wordsearch 46

Find the 16 Australasian rivers hidden here.



with thanks to Marc Hudson and Cameron Roberts

more roberts 2015



Saud Alsanousi

The Kuwaiti journalist, novelist and winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction talks to GRAEME GREEN about poverty, free speech and migrant workers in the Gulf.

What are you politically passionate about?

What really bothers me is when people are labelled, when they're put into categories. We see around the world that thousands are dying and people pay no attention to that, but sometimes one or two people die and there's uproar. Even in death, some people have more value than others. Earlier this year, the 'million man' march in Paris was a beautiful thing; I had goosebumps seeing people take to the streets to support *Charlie Hebdo* and I wished I was one of them. But I also wished that people would take to the streets and march whenever anyone dies in an unjust way around the world, whether Muslim, Christian or other, and that people would march when people in Syria, Burma, Gaza and other places also die.

The *Bamboo Stalk* tells the story of a man whose mother was a poor migrant worker from the Philippines who worked as a maid in Kuwait. Was there resistance to you writing this kind of book that shines a light on poverty and migration issues in the region?

No, not at all. Truth be told, these are topics covered on a daily basis by pan-Arab newspapers. But seeing these topics covered in a novel meant they could reach more people than before.

Do you think people want to talk about these subjects more?

No. They are considered a bit disturbing by some people who are

not really very comfortable listening to talk about poverty and migration. They feel like their dirty laundry is being put out in the open for everyone to see. I was even accused of stabbing my country in the back to get this prize [the International Prize for Arabic Fiction]. But I have to say that the novel doesn't really focus only on the issue of migration. That's just a small part. This novel is mostly about identity struggle, religious struggle and culture shock.

Why is there exploitation of poor migrants in countries like Kuwait and Qatar when there's no shortage of wealth there?

The problem lies in the culture itself. It has nothing to do with wealth. The Arab region is a closed community. We're kind of isolated. A stranger here remains a stranger, even if this person comes and lives with us and stays with us. This kind of isolation works against us. I'm not saying the fault lies with the government or shortcomings in the legal system. The fault lies with the culture itself.

Do you see exploitation of the weak and poor as a global problem?

Of course, but at varying degrees. Many countries have the problem where the more powerful people exploit the weak and the poor. But in Kuwait, the problem is cultural.

What is it like to be a journalist in Kuwait?

The feeling of freedom is high,

in comparison to other countries in the region. There is room for journalists to write with a certain amount of freedom. But recently some governmental censorship has emerged. There was something interesting written about *The Bamboo Stalk*, that the book is like 'friendly fire', because it criticizes Kuwait. But the book actually won the highest state award for an Arab novel, and I was even honoured by the Emir.

Is there an appetite for change in the Gulf region?

In recent years, some changes have taken place – for example, in Saudi Arabia, such as people building new mixed universities. But we still see that the popular movement for change in Saudi Arabia is bigger than the political will to change. For instance, look at the demand from women to be able to drive a car.

What's your earliest memory?

There are two that come to mind. The first is quite personal, about spending time with my grandmother. I had a very special relationship with her, back when we all lived in the family home. She was pivotal to my childhood. She was a legend. Her stories left a big impact on my soul and on my novels. The other memory is when I was nine years old and Iraq invaded Kuwait. This had a very significant effect on me as a child.

What's your biggest fear?

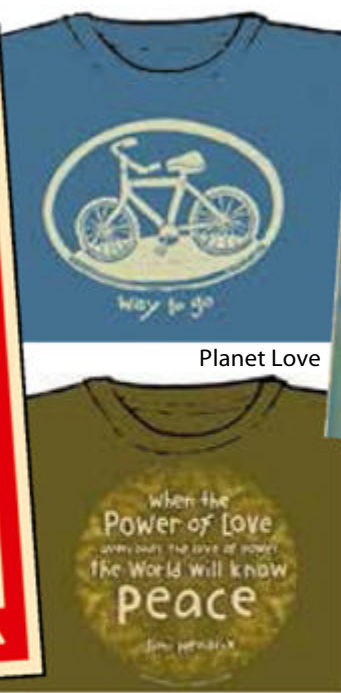
For my country to be lost. In this country, in our society, there are a lot of differences: political differences and disagreements, especially between Shi'a and Sunnis; social differences; cultural differences... I'm very concerned by these disagreements. These are actually the subject of my next novel. ■

The Bamboo Stalk by Saud Alsanousi is published on 23 April by Bloomsbury. Graeme Green is a journalist and photographer: @greengraeme

Shepard Fairey



Poster, T-shirt, Note & Postcard

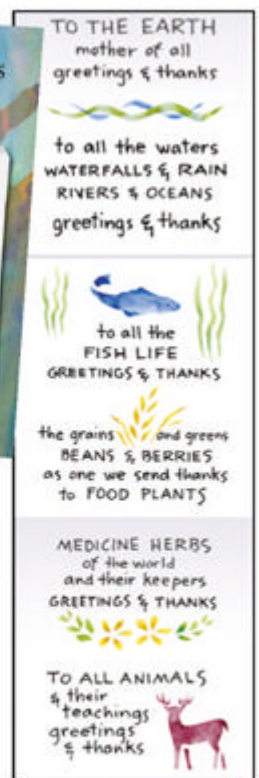


Planet Love

Organic cotton
sweatshop free T-shirts



One of our
BEST SELLERS!
*Greetings And Thanks
To The Natural World*
Accordion Poster
4.25x53" long with
string for hanging.
Eleven panels,
three shown.



SyracuseCulturalWorkers.com

800.949.5139

Visa, MC
Discover

Box 6367 • Syracuse, NY • 13217 • USA

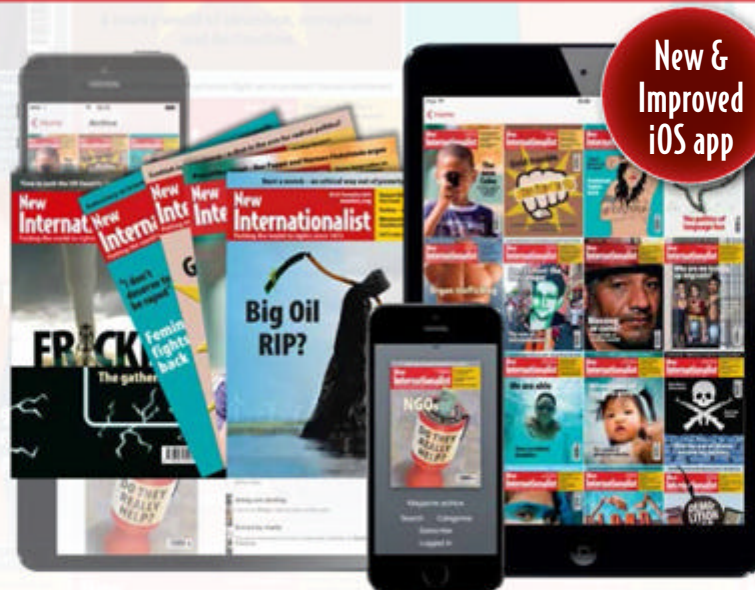


JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Subscribe to our
print magazine
newint.org/subscribe

Free digital access and
archive included

Already a print
subscriber?
Activate your free
digital access at
[newint.org/go/
digital-access](http://newint.org/go/digital-access)



New &
Improved
iOS app

A simple and
elegant mobile
reading experience

Share articles on
social media

Available for
offline reading



Become a Friend and together we will confront
today's critical global injustice issues

newint.org/donation



newint.org

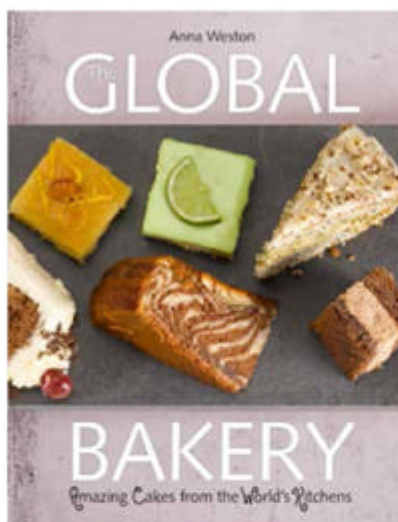


New Internationalist



@newint

Sign up to our FREE email newsletter at newint.org/misc/newsletter

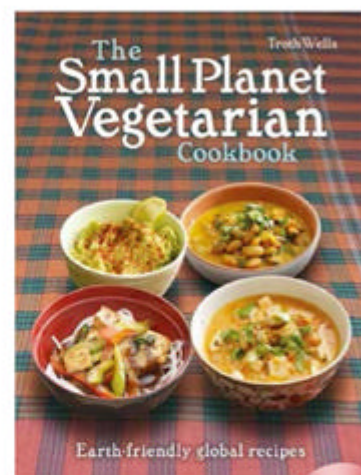


GLOBAL BAKERY

Price \$25.00

Code BGLOB

Gathers over 60 cake recipes from all around the world in one volume. With all occasions catered for, you'll go on an epic journey of taste with home-baker extraordinaire Anna Weston, discovering the world's favourite cakes along the way. Includes vegan, gluten-free and wheat-free recipes to suit all tastes. Hardback. Size: 25cm x 19cm. 184 pages.



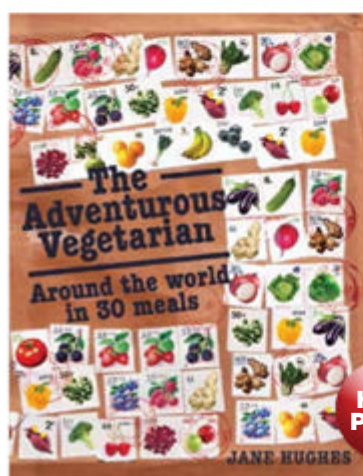
SMALL PLANET VEGETARIAN COOKBOOK

Price \$17.48

Code BSPK

Earth-friendly global recipes in mezze or tapas style. Delicious dishes with a whole array of different combinations to try. Hardback. Size: 25cm x 18cm. 256 pages.

HALF PRICE



THE ADVENTUROUS VEGETARIAN

Price \$14.98

Code BADV

30 countries; 30 sumptuous menus offering everything you need to give your friends and family a taste of how other vegetarians eat. Written by the editor of the UK Vegetarian Society in collaboration with groups all over the world.

Photography throughout. Hardback.

Size: 25cm x 18cm. 296 pages.

HALF PRICE



BABA DIDI AND THE GODWITS FLY

Price \$9.95

Code BBAB

The enchanting story of a fantastical flight, and of the courage and endurance it takes for birds – and people – to keep going to reach a safe destination. A beautifully illustrated story for children aged 4-9. The book has a foreword by Helen Clark, the former NZ prime minister who is now head of the UN Development Programme. Royalties support UNICEF. Hardback. Size: 27cm x 21cm. 28 pages.



RAINBOW WARRIORS

Price \$19.95

Code BRAIN

Rainbow Warriors is written by a long-serving Greenpeace activist and tells stories of life on board the Esperanza, the Arctic Sunrise and, of course, the Rainbow Warrior itself. It gives the inside story to some of the ships' most exciting adventures, including the recent plight of the Arctic 30. Paperback.

Size 18cm x 23.5cm. 248 pages.



JULIANA'S BANANAS

Price \$11.95

Code BBAN

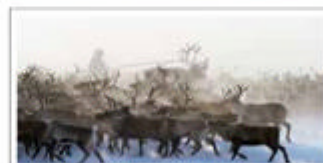
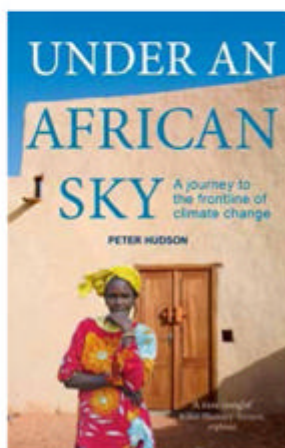
Follow the story of Juliana and her children to learn how the Windward Islands' fairtrade bananas are grown and transported to our shelves. Packed with colourful illustrations and featuring lots of facts about fairtrade and some yummy banana recipes. Hardback. Size: 18cm x 22cm. 32 pages. Ages: 4-7.

Under An African Sky: A JOURNEY TO THE FRONTLINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Price \$16.95

Code BVILL

'Peter Hudson's lyrical book about the village (in Mauritania) he has been visiting for the last 20 years gives rare insight to the problem their brave people face' – Robin Hanbury-Tenison Paperback. Size: 22cm x 14cm. 240 pages.



ONE WORLD GREETINGS CARDS

Price \$12.95

Code 15CRD

Pack of ten cards, two each of five photographs selected from the New Internationalist One World Calendar. Size: 10.5cm x 21cm.

